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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## THESIS

### KURDISH NATIONALISM: AMERICAN INTERESTS AND POLICY OPTIONS

by

Elizabeth R. Hooks

December 1996

Thesis Advisor:

Daniel Moran

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**KURDISH NATIONALISM:  
AMERICAN INTERESTS  
AND POLICY OPTIONS**

Elizabeth R. Hooks  
Lieutenant, United States Navy  
B.A., University of Notre Dame, 1990

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

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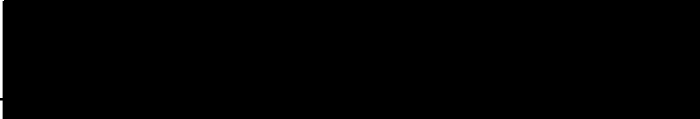
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Kurds are currently the largest nation of people without their own country. They are divided among several states, predominantly Iran, Iraq and Turkey where they constitute large minorities. They have persistently been used as pawns by these countries and others, including the United States; only to be ignored once supporting them has no longer been beneficial. The Kurdish struggle for an independent homeland has repeatedly erupted into violence throughout history. To date there has been no permanent solution that has been acceptable to both the Kurds and the states they live in.

This thesis will examine the history of the Kurdish struggle in order to understand how their experiences have shaped the current conditions, and to help develop an effective, long term American policy to control the situation. It will examine how the lessons of the past can be applied to policies today. The Kurdish struggle has periodically disrupted the stability and security of three of the largest nations in the Middle East. In this area, which is of vital interest to the United States, these movements threaten the fragile stability of the region. The recurring nature of these rebellions implies that it is only a matter of time before one directly threatens our interests in the area. For this reason, a thorough understanding of the Kurdish struggle is necessary.





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we leave the relative stability of the cold war, it often seems as if we are entering a period of ethnic strife. Lately the Kurdish conflict has increasingly captured the attention of both the American public and policy makers. For this reason, it is essential to not only have a thorough understanding of the current situation, but also of the events which created it. This thesis will examine the history of the Kurdish struggle to determine how it has impacted current events. In addition it will show how the lessons learned from the past can still be applicable in formulating an effective policy. Although the Kurdish struggle has evolved, several factors which influenced previous rebellions remain relevant today. Even though the Kurds have been fighting amongst themselves and against the states they inhabit for centuries, this thesis will only study significant rebellions since the World War I, when their struggles adopted more nationalistic overtones. Kurdish ethnicity, and the nature and effects of several key uprisings in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran will be examined.

In Iraq, there is a long legacy of Kurdish rebellion against the central government. These struggles led to the emergence of the legendary Kurdish leader, Mullah Mustafa Barzani. In the 1970's he battled Baghdad, with assistance from Iran, Israel and the United States. Following the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurds of Iraq were victims of the genocidal Anfal Campaigns. During the Gulf War the Iraqi Kurds rose up against Saddam Hussein, and were mercilessly crushed after the war by the remaining Iraqi Army. This has prompted the United States and other nations to set up Operation Provide Comfort to protect the Kurds.

Beneath this protection, however, the two main Kurdish parties have been engaged in a bloody power struggle.

In Turkey, the Kurdish Workers Party, has thrown the entire southeast portion of the nation into a civil war which has endured since 1984. This protracted war has damaged the Turkish economy, and strained relations with the European Union and other nations. Several times the Turkish Army has pursued these terrorist guerrillas across international borders. Turkey has been further criticized for alleged human rights violations in conjunction with the Kurdish conflict. This struggle threatens to further destabilize an important American ally in a volatile region.

In Iran, the Kurds managed to set up a short lived, independent, Soviet sponsored state following World War II. Although it lasted less than a year, its legacy remains a rallying point for the Kurdish cause. In Iran, the Kurds are more assimilated than in any other nation, and they supported the Islamic Revolution, only to later turn against the regime. However, due to power struggles and the assassinations of two key leaders, they have failed to become an effective force in the current resistance against Tehran.

The Kurdish struggle has periodically disrupted the stability and security of three of the largest nations in the Middle East. In this area, which is of vital interest to the United States, these movements threaten the fragile stability of the region. If left unchecked and unresolved, these conflicts have the potential to escalate into a Bosnian type crisis. The development of an effective policy, capable of not just stifling the conflicts, but of providing a long term solution is essential.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Americans instinctively have a hard time understanding ethnic conflicts. However, the number of ethnic conflicts in the world has been increasing since the 1960's. The eruption of new ethnic conflicts since the end of the Cold War, as well as the persistence of older unresolved ones pose major legal, political and humanitarian challenges to the international system. As the remaining superpower, we are in a position to influence the way they are resolved. The recurring Kurdish struggle in the Middle East has increasingly involved the United States. Furthermore it remains a destabilizing factor in an already unstable region of the world, which if left unchecked could threaten our national interests in the area. Therefore it is essential for the United States to develop an effective policy which will promote a long term solution to the Kurdish question.

The United States has a tendency to devalue ethnic struggles. We are a country of immigrants, and we are taught that our very strength is derived from the fact that we are a melting pot of people from a variety of origins. "The United States was never a society which was already there, but one which was deliberately made."<sup>1</sup> Immigrants voluntarily leave their homeland and move to another country. After time, and in cases where there is little discrimination and some upward mobility, one's country of origin has little economic or political significance. As in the case of Irish Americans, a century ago, as new

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<sup>1</sup> William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations, Civilization and the Furies of Nationalism*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pg. 162.

immigrants, they dealt with prejudice, however, today being of Irish descent hardly impacts their life. Many point to the success of the American experience, where broad scale assimilation took place, and wonder why the situation is not so easily duplicated. Yet the situation here is different and unique. The overwhelming number of ethnic struggles grow out of "...a situation characterized by two or more large groups, each ensconced in a territory it considers its traditional homeland and cultural preserve."<sup>2</sup> Many Kurds have not left their homeland, and they have no desire to do so. Likewise, many who have left have not done so voluntarily, but were forced out. They consider themselves to be first and foremost Kurds, and have no desire to become Turk, Persian, or Arab just because Kurdistan is not a state. An individual's feeling about his identity varies widely. Most citizens of the United States consider themselves to be Americans, however it is important to keep in mind that most people do not define their national identity by the state they live in.

Most geographic boundaries are the result of imperial conquest and colonial rule. The term nation-state, describing a nations whose borders approximate those of a state, is often used and can be very misleading, since less than ten percent of all states contain homogenous populations.<sup>3</sup> Most borders were arbitrarily drawn to suit the administrative or political interests of the ruling power. This is especially the case in the Middle East where most of the current states were created or defined following the First World War. Kurds currently live predominantly in the region divided by the boundaries of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and

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<sup>2</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, (Princeton University Press, 1994), pg. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pg. 40.



the former Soviet Union. However the vast majority of them live in Turkey, Iran and Iraq where they constitute large minorities.

The legacy of Imperialism has had a profound effect on ethnic conflicts today. Empires were established at the expense of weaker people. Local economies were undermined and transformed by colonial rule. Economic policies were made to favor the dominant group and natives were often reduced to laborers, filling the less desirable jobs. Different class structures were created, leading to an unequal distribution of wealth and resources. Colonialists often forced the indigenous population into reservations, forced assimilation or in some cases slaughtered or enslaved them. Stratified and ethnically divided societies were the result. Often one native group was played against another which led to further polarization. The antagonisms and inequalities left by colonization fuel many contemporary conflicts.

During the Cold War, ethnic conflicts seldom received attention, unless they threatened to upset the balance of power. Ethnic conflicts, as long as they did not spill over the state's borders, were considered domestic matters best left to individual states. Neither superpower would interfere in another state's internal affairs, for fear of the other's reaction. In this atmosphere gross human rights violations were able to occur, with little reaction by the international community. However since the Cold War has ended, the United Nations and the United States have become increasingly involved in humanitarian, or peacekeeping missions. Most of these missions, were to help resolve struggles which had their roots in ethnic conflict. As the United States continues to be involved in these types of missions,

developing policies capable of reducing ethnic tensions becomes increasingly more important.

Some scholars have argued that ethnic differences will become irrelevant with economic development, the migration of rural populations to the cities, increased literacy and better communications.<sup>4</sup> This theory of modernization asserts that ethnic ties will be replaced by loyalty to larger communities, and the differences between groups will be minimized. However the increasing number of ethnic conflicts shows that ethnicity remains a volatile force in the world. To explain the continuing salience of ethnicity, more theories have been formed. Primordialism asserts that modernization is indeed a threat to ethnic and religious foundations, but instead of weakening them it has the inverse effect of mobilizing people to protect their culture and way of life.<sup>5</sup> Instrumental explanations of ethnic conflict attribute conflict mainly to the manipulation of ethnic identity in order to acquire material or political gains, and asserts that modernization just increases awareness of, and resentment of, the differences between minorities and the controlling group.<sup>6</sup> The primordial and instrumental theories are not exclusive, and most theories incorporate aspects of both.

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<sup>4</sup> For further explanation see Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1953) and David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> See David L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) or, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> See Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization To Revolution*, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

Various points of these theories can be seen in the Kurdish rebellions throughout history, and help explain their mobilization.

In addition to the causes of ethnic conflict, "it is essential when one is trying to understand the passion and persistence with which ethnic groups pursue their objectives to analyze the historical process and particular experiences that have shaped each peoples identity and grievances."<sup>7</sup> Therefore to better understand the condition of the Kurds and formulate an effective policy towards them, this thesis will briefly describe Kurdish ethnicity, and examine key historic moments in Iraq, Turkey and Iran.

#### **A. KURDISTAN: THE LAND OF THE KURDS**

The term Kurdistan, or the "Land of the Kurds," refers to the area where the Kurds constitute an ethnic majority. This area covers approximately 230,000 square miles, roughly the size of France or Texas. "Kurdistan consists basically of the mountainous areas of the central and northern Zagros, the eastern one third of the Taurus and Pontus, and the northern half of the Amanus ranges."<sup>8</sup> The mean annual precipitation is 60-80 inches per year in the central regions, and ranges to 20-40 inches in the lower regions. Most of this precipitation is in the form of snow, which, in some areas can fall for up to six months of the year, causing

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<sup>7</sup> Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pg. 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Mehrdad R. Izady, *Kurdish Studies, an International Journal*, Vol. 5, Number 1 & 2, (The Kurdish Library, Spring-Fall 1992), [Online] available: <http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/Kurdish/htdocs/html/...>

the formation of permanent glaciers in the highlands. This is the source of a latticework of rivers throughout Kurdistan as well as the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The average temperature is 55-65 degrees Fahrenheit, getting colder in the higher regions. Despite its mountainous terrain, Kurdistan has proportionately more arable land than most Middle Eastern countries. In addition to large oil deposits, Kurdistan holds reserves of chrome, copper, iron and coal.<sup>9</sup>

### **1. Population**

There are an estimated 26.3 million Kurds today.<sup>10</sup> However, as with many other details surrounding Kurdish identity, this number is questionable. Kurdish sources have a tendency to exaggerate the number of Kurds (some as high as 35 million<sup>11</sup>) in order to exaggerate their importance. On the other hand, the governments in the area, for obvious political reasons, have a tendency to underestimate the number. It is estimated that 52% of the Kurds live in Turkey where they make up 24% of the population, 26% in Iran where they make up 12% of the population, 16% in Iraq where they make up 24% of the population, 5% in Syria where they are 9% of the population, and 1.5% of the Kurds live in the former Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, *No Friends But the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pg. 53-54.

<sup>10</sup> Izady, *Kurdish Studies*.

<sup>11</sup> Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), pg 3.

<sup>12</sup> Izady, *Kurdish Studies*.

Today, the Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, after the Arabs, Persians, and Turks. They are the largest nation of people without their own state. Since the 1960's the number of Kurds has grown steadily. It is estimated that within fifty years, they will become the third most populous ethnic group in the region, displacing the Turks. In Turkey itself, the Kurds will no longer be a minority in fifty years; they will be roughly equal to the number of Turks.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. Language**

One of the indicators of ethnonationalism is a shared language. The Kurds share several. Their languages are members of the Northwestern subdivision of the Iranic branch of the Indo-European family of languages.<sup>14</sup> Their language is related to Farsi, in roughly the same manner that German is related to Danish. Kurmânji is the most common language and is spoken by over half of the Kurds. It is spoken by most of the Kurds in Turkey and Syria and in the northern parts of Iran and Iraq. Sorâni is predominantly spoken in the Southern region of Kurdistan. These are two separate languages, and not dialects. A person who spoke only one of the languages would not be able to comprehend someone speaking the other one. In addition there are three other languages spoken by a large number Kurds. In the southeast, Kurds speak Laki, a language which is more closely related to Farsi than it is to Sorâni. Gorâni is spoken in certain sections of Southern Kurdistan and is related to Zâzâ which is

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<sup>13</sup> Izady, *Kurdish Studies*.

<sup>14</sup> Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook* (Washington: Taylor and Francis Inc., 1992), pg 167-173.

spoken in parts of Turkey. Gorâni and Zâzâ are related, and it seems likely that they are both derivatives of the original language spoken in the region. When the Kurmânji and Sorâni speakers arrived, they pushed those communities apart and separately, they developed into distinct languages.<sup>15</sup>

Communication among the Kurds is hindered not only by a lack of a common language, but also a lack of a common alphabet. In Iran and Iraq a modified Perso-Arabic alphabet is used for Sorâni. In Turkey, the Kurmânji speaking Kurds use a modified form of the Latin alphabet in the few sanctioned Kurdish newspapers or journals allowed since 1991. The large number of Kurdish emigrants in Western Europe publish using this modified Latin alphabet. In the former Soviet Union, Kurmânji-speaking Kurds first wrote using the Armenian alphabet in the 1920's, then the Latin alphabet in 1927, followed by the Cyrillic alphabet in 1945. Today they use both the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabet. Gurâni-speaking Kurds use the Persian alphabet.<sup>16</sup>

With the modern rise of Kurdish nationalism there have been several failed attempts at forming a unified Kurdish language with a single alphabet. Due to the diversity of the languages (or dialects as the nationalists prefer to say) a common ground has not been found.<sup>17</sup> However efforts at any serious Kurdish linguistic or literary achievements have

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<sup>15</sup> Phillip G. Kreyenbroek, "On the Kurdish Language," *The Kurds a Contemporary Overview*, edited by Phillip G Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, (London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1992), pg. 68-83.

<sup>16</sup> Izady, *Kurdish Studies*.

<sup>17</sup> Kreyenbroek and Sperl, pg. 69-70.

been stifled by the laws and conditions which the Kurds live with. From 1938 - 1991 speaking Kurdish was illegal in Turkey, and the words "Kurd" or "Kurdistan" were banned from the official vocabulary. Although today these Mountain Turks are allowed to speak their own language in private, it is still not allowed in writing or broadcasting, nor is it taught in the schools.<sup>18</sup> Although Kurds in other countries have not faced methods as harsh and enduring as those in Turkey, each have endured periods where schools were only allowed to teach in the official language and other forms of linguistic prejudice. To make matters worse, Kurds inhabit the poorest and most backward regions of states that can hardly be considered modern. Illiteracy is rampant; most Kurds are more concerned with where their next meal will come from, as opposed to which alphabet they should use if they knew how to write.

### **3. Religion**

The Kurds practice several different religions, but over three-fifths of them (and almost all of the Kurmânji speaking) are nominally Sunni Muslims. About 5-7% of the Kurds, mostly living in southern Kurdistan and Khurasan are followers of the Imami (Twelver) Shi'ite Islam. The overwhelming majority of the Muslim Kurds are members of one of several Sufi mystic orders. The religious leaders of these orders have played an important part in many Kurdish uprisings. The Sufi shaykhs train deputies to supervise followers in various districts, collecting dues and allegiances. However, to actually join an

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<sup>18</sup> Hazhir Teimourian, "Kurdish Nationalism -An International Headache?" Jane's Intelligence Review Yearbook, (Jane's Information Group Limited), December 31, 1994, pg. 81, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

order, an individual needs to be initiated. These initiated members, or murids, are the ones who participate in the many rituals, dances, chants, and prayers that the Sufis are famous for. These murids will go into combat for their shaykhs, as was the case in the rebellions led by Shaykh Ubaydullâh, Shaykh Sa'id, Shaykh Ahmad Barzani, and Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji. Today the murid-shaykh relationship plays an important part in gaining votes. The various political parties cater to the shaykhs in order to receive their endorsement, and hopefully the votes of their murids along with it.<sup>19</sup>

The oldest Sufi order followed by the Kurds is the Qâdiri. The Talabani tribe, the leaders of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan are mainly Qâdiris. Shaykh Mahmud, who led several Kurdish rebellions in Iran and Iraq was also a Qâdiri. With the development of another Sufi order, the Naqshbandi, the number of Qâdiris has been declining. The famous Barzani tribe and the Iraqi Kurdish Democratic Party are mainly affiliated with the Naqshbandi order. Another common Sufi mystic order is the Baktâshi, commonly known as the “whirling dervishes”. Both the Qâdiri and the Baktâshi use elaborate dances, play musical instruments and chant during their ceremonies to reach their state of ecstasy, while the Naqshbandi mainly use chants and meditation.<sup>20</sup> Another less common Sufi order, the Rafâ, believes in the ability of the soul to transcend the physical body. Their ceremonies include “walking barefoot on hot coal, swallowing swords, and driving sharp objects through one’s own flesh, and in all cases, seemingly coming out unharmed.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 158.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pg 160-161.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pg. 161.



Most non-Muslim Kurds follow an ancient indigenous faith, known as the Cult of Angels. Today only three branches of this cult survive, they are Yezidism (2% of the Kurds), Alevism(20%), and Yârsânism(13%). All denominations of the Cult hold the fundamental belief in "luminous angelic beings of ether, numbering seven, that protect the universe from an equal number of balancing dark forces of matter."<sup>22</sup> Another cornerstone of the Cult is the belief in the transmigration of souls, numerous reincarnations, and the special significance of the number seven. The rites of the Cult have traditionally been kept a secret from non-members, however it is a universalist religion, believing in the legitimacy of other religions as manifestations of the belief in The Spirit. Yârsânism believes that humans are the end product of an evolutionary migration of the soul from inanimate objects, to plants, animals, and then humans. Alevism practices a divine reverence for the first Imam Ali, and often join Ali and the Prophet as Alimohammad, a single avator with double manifestations. Those who practice Yezidism have often been referred to as devil worshipers. The Yezedis emphasize the importance of the angels, among them Lucifer (Malak Tâwus- the Peacock Angel). He is credited with creating the material world, including the pearl in which The Spirit once resided. Even today, the Yezidis are pressured to convert. There is even some efforts to strip them of their Kurdish association, making them their own independent ethnic group. They are often called Ummayyad Arabs because their founder, Yezid, is often

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<sup>22</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, Pg 137.

associated with the Umayyad Caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awiyya (AD 680-683), the arch villain to Shiite Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Society**

The Kurds themselves traditionally live in tribal groups based on the concept of common ancestry. The tribe's size and views depend on several factors including, economics, the personalities of the leaders, and relations with tribal and non-tribal neighbors as well as other states. Whatever the reason the tribe banded together, the tribe member's main political loyalty is usually to the tribal chief or leader.<sup>24</sup> This loyalty has been exploited by the regional states for centuries. In order to keep the Kurds from becoming too strong, the state would win the loyalties of a tribal chief and incite him to fight against another tribe or another state. Although the significance of tribalism has diminished recently, governments still encourage Kurds to fight each other. The most important single feature in Kurdish society is the allegiance to the tribe. In the absence of a single Kurdish state, language, religion or unifying factor, the tribe serves as the highest source of authority, in which people place their allegiance.

#### **5. Origins**

The exact origin of the Kurds is unknown, but most Kurds trace their origin back to the Medes, an Indo-European tribe that arrived in central Asia, and the Iranian plateau around

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<sup>23</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 137-153.

<sup>24</sup> David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pg. 13-17.

614BC, where they ruled until 550 B.C. They were one of the major pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties, until they were defeated by the Persians. After the Arab conquest in the seventh century the term "Kurd" was used to refer to the inhabitants of the Zagros Mountains in

northwestern Iran. This term included those who claimed to be descendants of the Medes and other ethnic groups and tribes who had become intermingled with them over the years.<sup>25</sup>

The Kurds first became strategically significant with the rise of the rivalry between the Safavid Dynasty in Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Both the Persians and the Ottomans viewed the Kurds as a buffer between them. During their repeated conflicts the Kurds were often divided amongst themselves, with the Alevi Kurds fighting on the side of the Persians and the Sunni Muslims fighting on the side of the Ottomans. The Kurds were also victims of several massive deportation and resettlement campaigns by both the Persians and the Ottomans. All this occurred at a time the Kurds were already significantly weakened economically, by the shift in the trade routes resulting from the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. Despite these conditions several semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities flourished, some even surviving into the 19th century. However, the Ottoman and the Persian Empire's quest for a strong centralized state countered the freedom of the principalities, causing several rebellions which were crushed by one side or the other.<sup>26</sup> In

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<sup>25</sup> Entessar, pg. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

1639 the Ottoman and Persian Empires finally agreed on a border, which effectively divided Kurdistan into spheres of influence.<sup>27</sup>

## **B. SHAYKH OBEYDOLLAH REBELLION**

The most significant revolt prior to World War I was in the 1880's under the leadership of Shaykh Obeydollah. Shaykh Obeydollah had been forced to flee from Iran, where he had successfully incited the Kurds to rise up against the Shah. Afterwards he formed an alliance with the sultan and supported him in his war against Russia in 1877. However, this alliance was progressively weakened by Obeydollah's Kurdish nationalist aspirations. Obeydollah sought to set up an independent Kurdish principality encompassing all of Kurdistan, with himself as its leader. When the British government was thinking of forming an Armenian Protectorate, he sought their support for achieving the same for the Kurds, writing to the British Consul-General in Tabriz that:

The Kurdish nation... is a people apart. Their religion is different [from that of others], and their laws and customs are distinct...the Chiefs and Rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan, one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on in this way with the two Governments, and that necessarily something must be done, so that European Governments having understood the matter, shall inquire into our state. We also are a nation apart. We want our affairs to be in our own hands.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Amir Hassanpour, "The Kurdish Experience," *Middle East Report*, (July-August, 1994), [Online] Available: [http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/Kurdish/htdocs/html/kurdish\\_ex.html](http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/Kurdish/htdocs/html/kurdish_ex.html)

<sup>28</sup> McDowall, pg. 53.

The British refused the request, and for over a century the situation of the Kurds has remained virtually unchanged. They are still divided and ruled by separate states, and forced to turn to other states for aid and support.

Under Shaykh Obeydollah, the Kurds were able to successfully unify the area between Lake Uromiyah in Iran and Lake Van in Turkey. However this victory was short lived, as the Persians and Ottomans crushed the revolt by joining forces and attacking from both sides.<sup>29</sup> This rebellion was "...significant in that it augured the emergence of twentieth century Kurdish uprisings with nationalistic, as opposed to feudalistic, tribal, or religious, overtones."<sup>30</sup>

### C. THE TREATY OF SEVRES

The closest the Kurds have ever come to unified, independent Kurdistan, was after World War I. The Treaty of Sèvres, signed August 10, 1920, dismantled the Ottoman Empire, and has been the base for all claims to an independent Kurdistan ever since. Section III, Articles 62-64 provided for the creation of a Kurdish state. Article 64 read as follows:

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 [comprising western Kurdistan] shall address themselves to the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas. The

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<sup>29</sup> Arnold Hottinger, "The Roots of the Kurdish Conflict," *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, AG fuer Die Neue Zuercher Zeitung NZZ, (January 5, 1994), [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>30</sup> Entessar, pg. 82.

detailed provisions for such a renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the principal Allied Powers and Turkey. If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish state of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul Vilayet [comprising central Kurdistan].<sup>31</sup>

This treaty was signed by the Allied powers and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, but it was subsequently preempted by Ataturk's successful revolution, which created a new Turkish Republic that did not feel bound by old agreements.<sup>32</sup>

#### **D. THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE**

The Sèvres agreement was superseded on June 24, 1923, by the Treaty of Lausanne, which laid down the modern borders of Turkey. However, in the treaty neither the Kurds, nor Kurdistan were mentioned. However Article 39 guaranteed:

No restrictions shall be placed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings. Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the courts.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 59-60.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pg. 61.

As for the oil-rich Mosul Villayet, and who it belonged to, the issue was left open. "It was only settled when Britain and France reached an agreement between them, in which Paris received a packet of shares in the Iraqi Oil Company, and Mosul with its surrounding province was assigned to Iraq."<sup>34</sup>

At the time the treaty was signed, Ataturk had driven the British, French, and Greeks out of the country. With the exception of the Mosul Villayet, Turkish sovereignty over the land had already been accomplished. The Kurds had fought alongside Ataturk as the infidels were driven from the land. The Kurds initially viewed Ataturk as a strong leader who would be able to protect the Kurds and they believed in his anti-imperialist, multi-ethnic vision for Turkey.<sup>35</sup>

The Kurds are a divided people that has been fighting for independence for over a hundred years now. In their efforts, they have divided themselves further and alienated the governments that maintain sovereignty over them. They may have valid claims towards status as a nation, and have been used and made victims of countless atrocities by others; yet their inability to cooperate, and the tactics they use in their struggle have significantly undermined their cause and diminished their prospects of having their own state. The following chapters summarize some critical moments in their history, since the First World War.

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<sup>34</sup> Hottinger.

<sup>35</sup> James Ciment, *The Kurds, State and Minority in Turkey, Iraq and Iran*, (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1996), pg. 42-45.





## II. THE KURDS OF IRAQ

Kurds may share the same history, ethnicity and customs, but they do not necessarily share the same views or goals. They are divided by language, religion, and national boundaries. Their separateness has been emphasized by the countries they live in, and by governments playing one group against another. The Kurdish card has been used by governments as a means to get what they want, and then it has been tossed away. Kurds have endured prejudice, mistreatment, betrayal and have been massacred by governments as well as fellow Kurds. They have learned that government aid can not be relied on, and they have learned that ethnic ties do not bind. Kurds have fought hard for what they have, and little is taken for granted. As a result they seldom have faith in others not from their same tribe or region, and their leaders do not trust what they do not control.

Although the Kurds have always enjoyed a comparatively large amount of cultural freedom and opportunity in Iraq, they have had an active history of rebellions. In Iraq their existence as a separate ethnic group, with a different heritage, culture and language has never been denied. The Kurdish region is vital to the economy. It is a region rich in agriculture and oil, granting its Kurdish inhabitants more power. The Iraqi state has always embraced its minorities as distinct but integral components of the state. The various Kurdish leaders and the central government have almost always been willing to negotiate with the other when it is advantageous, but they have been just as likely to forgo negotiations, when they sense the other is weak, or divided. The Kurds in Iraq have seldom been united behind a single leader or cause, and the government has continually recognized and exploited this weakness.

After World War I, Iraq was a British protectorate. The British placed King Faisal on the throne of the newly created state. Iraq could hardly be called a stable state at the time. The allocation of the Mosul Villayet remained undetermined, and loyalty to the newly created state was uncertain. Although it was already apparent that Kurdish aspirations of self-determination were likely to remain unfulfilled, the Kurds were not pleased with being subjugated to Arab rule. In an attempt to bring more control over Iraq, the British adopted the policy of appointing tribal or popular leaders as governors over their areas of influence. Although, in many cases this strengthened the influence of the local leader, it also served as a means of gaining the leaders loyalty.

#### **A. SHAYKH MAHMUD REBELLIONS**

Shaykh Mahmud was appointed the governor of Sulaymania. He was only a minor Shaykh at the time, but he was an extremely ambitious man. As soon as he was appointed governor, he sought to strengthen and expand his power base. Although the British had excluded some areas like Kirkuk, as well as several important tribes, from his area of authority, in order to limit his influence, many of the other tribes accepted him as governor.<sup>36</sup> As governor, he attempted to present a unified Kurdish front, and pressed the British for greater autonomy. As his support among the tribes grew, so did his demands, and eventually the British began to regret selecting him. In an attempt to challenge him, without openly removing him, the British extended his authority over other areas, purposely creating conflicts with other tribes. Some of the other Kurdish tribes were opposed to his

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<sup>36</sup> Mc Dowall, pg. 156-157.

rule, and they rose up against him, with the backing of the British government. Realizing that working for the British as governor was no longer beneficial, Shaykh Mahmud rebelled against the British, and declared independence. The British dispatched troops and quickly suppressed the rebellion. What happened to Shaykh Mahmud next is questionable. There are some accounts that he was imprisoned in Baghdad. According to others he was

...exiled to India. According to another account, the British condemned him to death but later commuted his sentence. It is believed [he] escaped from captivity and fled to Sardasht, in Iran, where he continued his military challenge to the British Authorities.<sup>37</sup>

Shaykh Mahmud was allowed to return to Sulaymania in 1922. He immediately began to organize an opposition to the government. He declared an independent Kurdish Kingdom, with himself as king. To assert his independence he issued stamps, and organized an independent army and instigated another revolt.<sup>38</sup> Once again tribal rivalries hindered the drive for independence. Shaykh Mahmud was from an illustrious Qâdiri Sufi religious house, and partially due to this religious association, he was seen as a representative of the traditional society, which many more-modern Kurdish intellectuals blamed for the current Kurdish predicament. Furthermore, few tribes differentiated between being ruled by him or the British; they wanted independence, and did not wish to be ruled by either. Despite this, Shaykh Mahmud enjoyed a large power base.

At this time, however Ataturk's forces entered the Mosul Villayet in order to enforce their territorial claim to the area. Fearing the secular Turks, and their legendary savagery, more than the British, several Kurds switched sides from the anti-British Shaykh Mahmud side to the side of the

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<sup>37</sup> Entessar, pg. 50.

<sup>38</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 64.

British, to combat the Turks.<sup>39</sup> As a result the Shaykh suddenly lost a lot of his support. Under these conditions, along with a severe beating by ground troops, and RAF bombings, the rebellion was lost in 1924.<sup>40</sup>

In 1926 the Mosul Villayet was turned over to Iraq. The League of Nations did, however, require Iraq to allow cultural and social autonomy for the Kurds. Arabic and Kurdish were both made the official language in Mosul, and Kurdish children were to receive their education in Kurdish. Disenchanted with Iraqi rule, Shaykh Mahmud led another ill-fated revolt in 1927 in Sulaymania, which was quickly defeated by the British. Shaykh Mahmud fled to Iran where he instigated another revolt in Marivan. This was quickly suppressed by the Iranian army, and Shaykh Mahmud fled back to Iraq, where he was arrested and placed in internal exile in Southern Iraq.<sup>41</sup>

After decades of suppressing Kurdish revolts, neither the British, nor the Iraqis were inclined to include any provisions for Kurdish autonomy in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, which provided for an independent Iraq by 1932. Protesting the lack of provisions for the Kurds, Shaykh Mahmud rose up one last time, demanding autonomy, and not independence. This time, Mahmud had some difficulty raising support, yet he managed to hold out for a year before the British forces crushed him in 1931. However, in 1932, an amendment to the treaty included provisions for teaching Kurdish in the schools and elections of local Kurdish officials.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 64.

<sup>40</sup> Entessar, pg. 53.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pg 53-54.

<sup>42</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 65.

Shaykh Mahmud may have been persistent in his challenges to Baghdad, yet he is not considered a true Kurdish patriot. He was primarily interested in advancing himself, and leading the Kurdish cause provided him with the means to achieve his personal goals. If he had been more respected and capable of transcending tribal differences, uniting the Kurds behind him in the early 1920's, perhaps Kurdish history would be different. The Kurds were unable to provide a unified front, at that time when they had a reasonable hope of still achieving independence or autonomy. Moreover, they lacked a leader who possessed the charisma and integrity which would have been necessary. Shaykh Mahmud was the only one willing to lead them, but he was more interested in promoting himself, than the Kurdish cause.

## **B. SHAYKH AHMAD REBELLION**

Meanwhile the Barzani tribe began to emerge as another nucleus for Kurdish rebellions. In 1927, the first of the great Barzani leaders Shaykh Ahmad, a Naqshbandi Sufi religious leader, led a revolt demanding an independent Kurdistan. He used religion as a way to unify the Kurds behind him. He created a new religion combining aspects of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and the Cult of Angels. As the leader, and founder of this new religion, Shaykh Ahmad made himself one of its divine spirits.<sup>43</sup> It is uncertain whether Shaykh Ahmad was merely a religious zealot or the new religion was created as a novel way to broaden his support. Nonetheless, the new religion alienated several other tribes which may have otherwise supported him. His new religion was extreme, and

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<sup>43</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 64.

violated some basic Muslim beliefs. Shaykh Ahmad substituted his own name in the call to prayer, proclaimed that it was all right to eat pork, and he even called for the Quran to be destroyed.<sup>44</sup> Regardless of his religious eccentricity, his demands for independence were sparked, because he opposed a British plan to resettle some Assyrian Christians who had been expelled from Turkey, near the Barzani lands, and also as a means to acquire some of the revenues from the Kurdish oilfields. Heavy casualties from ground troops and RAF bombing forced the Barzanis to flee to Turkey. The British and Iraqi governments then offered amnesty to Shaykh Ahmad and his family. They returned to Iraq, only to be apprehended and sent into exile in Sulaymania.<sup>45</sup>

In hindsight, it was unwise for Baghdad to suppress Shaykh Ahmad as harshly as they did. His religious proclamations were so extreme, that not even all of his villages would support him in his fight, and other tribes were so offended by his beliefs, that they too were ready to rise against him. However, Baghdad decided to make an example of him. The heavy bombing left many civilian casualties, and turned many Kurds who did not support Ahmad against the government. The British also tarnished their image, by using delayed action bombs, which was in violation of the 1907 Hague Convention.<sup>46</sup> By making an example of a religious fanatic, who many considered to be deranged, they lost the support of the many victims of the bombings. Moreover, Shaykhs Ahmads rebellion provided the indoctrination of the Shaykhs younger brother, Mullah Mustafa Barzani.

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<sup>44</sup> McDowall, pg. 178-179.

<sup>45</sup> Entessar, pg. 54-55.

<sup>46</sup> Mc Dowall, pg. 180.

### C. MULLAH MUSTAFA BARZANI, THE EARLY YEARS

Mullah Mustafa Barzani is perhaps the most legendary and revered (or hated) Kurdish leader. He did not inherit his family's religious fanaticism, and was more of a secular leader, but he was a very tribal leader. For over thirty years he led the Kurds in their quest for independence. His tribal orientation annoyed many, more progressive, modern Kurds, who blamed the backwards tribal system, for keeping the Kurds divided. Nonetheless, he was the paramount Kurdish leader of his time, and his legacy is still a symbol of Kurdish hopes. His unique ability to combine his secular and religious influence into a charismatic leadership united a broad spectrum of Kurds behind him. This legendary leader "...failed to achieve his goal of Kurdish independence, but his stubborn attempts to obtain it, and his unique ability to inspire other Kurds to continue the fight, made him a nationalist hero for all the Kurds, irrespective of their place of domicile."<sup>47</sup>

Mullah Mustafa escaped from Sulaymania in 1943, and assumed leadership of the tribe. Shortly after his escape, he organized a small force, which began to attack symbols of the government. Within a year he had enough followers to fend off Iraqi troops. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said forced his brother Shaykh Ahmad to write him a letter asking him to surrender. This only caused Mullah Mustafa to intensify his raids. In 1944 an Iraqi delegation (consisting mainly of Kurds) was sent to negotiate with Mullah Mustafa. Among his demands was the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish province (which included Kirkuk), and more Kurds in government positions.

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<sup>47</sup>Anthony Hyman, "Elusive Kurdistan, the Struggle for Recognition", *Conflict Studies*, Vol 214, (London: The Center for Security and Conflict Studies, 1988), pg 6-7.

In addition, Shaykh Ahmad was released. However, as the government was debating these demands, the government fell, and the new Prime Minister Hamdi al-Pachachi called off the negotiations, and fighting resumed. The Iraqi forces, with the RAF eventually forced Mullah Mustafa to retreat into Iran.<sup>48</sup> While he was there he played an important role in the short-lived Republic of Mahabad, which will be explained further in Chapter IV.

#### **D. ORIGINS OF THE KDP VS PUK**

During the forties several Kurdish parties began to form. An offshoot of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I), the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP)<sup>49</sup> became active in promoting Kurdish causes. Mullah Mustafa Barzani returned to Iraq after the revolution in 1958. He immediately assumed the position of president of the KDP. The party eventually became divided into two branches. It had a tribal, conservative wing associated with Barzani, and a leftist, intellectual, Marxist wing associated with Ibrahim Ahmad, and his son-in-law Jalal Talabani. When Barzani was in the Soviet Union, Ahmad ruled the KDP. After Barzani returned, the two sides struggled for control until 1964, when Barzani kicked the Talabani group out. The conservative wing included mainly Northern Kurmânji (Badinani) speaking Kurds from the mountainous areas in the north, and the leftist wing included mainly South Kurmânji (Sorâni) speaking Kurds from towns and

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<sup>48</sup> Entessar, pg. 55-56.

<sup>49</sup> Although the Iranian KDP was the initial party, and the Iraqi KDP was created as a branch of the Iranian party, the Iraqi party is almost always referred to as the KDP, and the less active Iranian party is referred to as the KDP-I, in order to differentiate between them. The two parties are no longer affiliated.



cities in the south. The conservative wing tended to be Naqshbandi's and the leftist wing tended to be Qâdiri's. This division eventually fragmented the KDP, and the Ahmad-Talabani side would eventually become the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Both parties remain active in Iraq. The original differences between the two factions of the KDP although, less distinct remain between the KDP and the PUK today.<sup>50</sup>

#### **E. BARZANI IN THE 60'S AND 70'S**

After the 1958 revolution, Kurdish culture was allowed to flourish. The Iraqi flag had the Kurdish sun disk (a yellow disk, surrounded by seven red rays) added to the center between 1959 and 1963.<sup>51</sup> During this time a Kurdish University was established in Sulaymania. Despite this there were several small clashes between Barzani's *pesh merga* and Iraqi troops, and by 1961 another Kurdish revolt was underway.<sup>52</sup> From this point until 1975, the Kurds were intermittently at war with the various regimes that ruled Iraq.<sup>53</sup>

After the fighting resumed, the KDP initially turned towards the Iraqi Communist Party, proposing a joint effort at overthrowing Qasim. After their offer was rejected they began to support the Baath Party. However by 1963, Mullah Mustafa's *pesh mergas* had inflicted severe casualties

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<sup>50</sup>Entessar, pg. 21-23.

<sup>51</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 67.

<sup>52</sup> Hyman, pg. 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> During this time Iraq was led by Qasim, who was overthrown by the first Baath Party revolution in 1963, the nationalist military regime of the Aref brothers, and the second Baath revolution after 1968.

on the Iraqi forces. His successful use of guerilla tactics and the mountainous terrain had taken its toll. Qasim was forced to negotiate a cease fire and turn his attention towards other political adversaries. Shortly after the cease fire was declared, Qasim was overthrown by the Baathists. The Baath Party initially opted to honor the cease fire, and turned its attention to purging Communists from the government.

Shortly after the revolution, the proposed union of Syria and Iraq began to alarm the Kurds. They would have much less influence in a combined state, where they would be a much smaller minority. Talabani traveled to Cairo to meet Nasser as part of an Iraqi delegation. He showed two proposals to Nasser, detailing their autonomy demands in Iraq itself, and their demands, in the case of a merger with the United Arab Republic. Nasser was surprisingly supportive of their demands, although he would not support complete autonomy. Nonetheless the Kurds felt that the government would be less inclined to support their demands in the case of a merger, so they actually increased their demands on the government. At times the government negotiated separately with Barzani and Talabani factions of the KDP. Barzani was demanding autonomy of virtually all of the Mosul villayet, including Kirkuk. He also demanded a separate armed forces and two-thirds of the national oil revenues. Baghdad obviously considered Barzani's demand to be excessive, and then began negotiations with Talabani. At first, the government seemed inclined to accept Talabani's demands which was total autonomy with the exception of foreign affairs, finance, and national defense.<sup>54</sup> However the obvious growing rift in the KDP, led them to believe they might have more success in

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<sup>54</sup> McDowall, pg. 312-314.

a military campaign than Qasim did, so the government abruptly called off talks and fighting resumed.

Before President Abdul Salam Aref pulled his coup in 1963, he contacted Barzani, offering him a cease fire and promises to help marginalize the Talabani faction in the KDP. In return Barzani was to lend his forces in overthrowing the Baath regime.<sup>55</sup> Barzani was convinced that the war with Baghdad could wait, and seized upon the opportunity to become the sole leader of the Kurdish movement. In February, Barzani acting independently of the KDP signed an agreement with Aref. The agreement reinstated government control over Kurdistan, lifted the economic blockade, and allowed cultural freedom. The agreement made no mention of autonomy, which had long been the cornerstone of the Kurdish demands. Moreover it referred to Kurdistan with the Arab euphemism the *northern region*, a term the Kurds previously never would allow to be used in negotiations.

The Talabani faction of the KDP suddenly found itself in a corner. Since Barzani had returned from the Soviet Union, the KDP intelligentsia had capitalized on his prestige and influence among the tribes, by portraying him as the heroic Kurdish leader, in order to gain more support for the KDP. Barzani, although he was nominally the president of the KDP, had separated himself, negotiated independently, and had even gone as far as to publically state that it was acceptable for the government to abolish political parties, if it was in Iraq's best interests, and he had started receiving arms from Aref.

The Ahmad -Talabani faction of the KDP called for a KDP Sixth Congress, which formally condemned Barzani's action. In response, Barzani called his own Sixth Congress at which he

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<sup>55</sup> McDowall, pg. 315.

declared the other congress to be illegal, and arrested any prominent member of the Talabani faction who attended. Shortly afterwards, he sent his son Idris , with a large force of fighters, who drove Ahmad, Talabani, and about four thousand of their supporters into Iran.<sup>56</sup>

Once he was the undisputed head of the KDP and the entire Kurdish movement, he declared the terms of the agreement that he had negotiated with Aref to be unacceptable, and returned to his previous position of demanding nothing less than complete autonomy. Then using the weapons he received from Aref, he resumed fighting with Baghdad.

Despite the rift in the KDP, by 1965 Baghdad was forced to negotiate a settlement with Barzani. Prime Minister Abd al Rahman Bazzaz negotiated a very generous treaty, granting the Kurds full autonomy, including a locally elected government, as well as several assurances of cultural freedom.<sup>57</sup> However the treaty was never implemented, Bazzaz was removed, and fighting resumed. By this point the Kurds were strengthened in their struggle against Baghdad with weapons, money, intelligence, and food supplied from Iran, Israel, and the United States.

After the second Baath revolution in 1968, the rivalry between Barzani and Talabani, led the latter side to develop ties with Baath Party who shared its socialist ideas. In return for its support, the Ahmad-Talabani side was granted complete autonomy in the region between Kirkuk and Sulaymania. Some even fought with Iraqi troops against the KDP . However by this point, Barzani had become a serious threat to the government. He led an army of about 20,000 guerillas who were

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<sup>56</sup> McDowall, pg 317.

<sup>57</sup> Ciment, pg. 60.

well equipped with anti-aircraft guns, field guns, and anti-tank weapons supplied by Iran.<sup>58</sup> Since Talabani's forces were not helping Saddam turn the tide of the war, and granting them autonomy no longer benefitted Baghdad, Saddam abandoned him. Talabani humbly returned to fight alongside Barzani.

In 1970 Saddam was forced to negotiate another peace settlement with the Kurds. The four main provisions of the settlement included 1) Kurdish was recognized as the second national language; 2) a Kurdish autonomous region was to be established in four years; 3) only Kurdish speaking officials were to be appointed to the region; 4) the vice president of Iraq was to be a Kurd.<sup>59</sup> Although the treaty sounded promising, it soon became apparent that the treaty was merely to placate the rebels, and the government never intended to put the provisions in effect.

By 1974, the details of how the autonomous Kurdish area was to be governed was published. The power remained in Baghdad, and the fighting resumed. Despite the massive amounts of aid the Kurds were receiving, they were eventually beaten back. By the end of 1974, the Iraqi army controlled more of Iraqi Kurdistan than it had since 1961. The Iraqi army would normally withdraw from the mountains as winter fell, thus allowing the Kurds to regroup and rally supporters in time for the Spring offensives. However, that winter they remained in the mountains. Moreover, it became evident that the Kurds only hope to regain their ground was with the direct help of Iranian forces. Although some Iranian soldiers dressed as Kurds had fought with Barzani's men, Iran was

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<sup>58</sup> Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq, Tragedy and Hope*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), Pg. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 67.

not willing to overtly commit troops, or in other words start a full fledged war.<sup>60</sup> Although the Baath party remained in power, in March 1975, Iran and Iraq signed the Treaty of Algiers; the Shah received some territorial concessions he wanted and in return, withdrew support from the Kurds, and the revolt collapsed. Barzani escaped to Tehran, and finally to the United States, where he died of cancer in 1978.<sup>61</sup>

With Barzani's fall in 1975, the KDP fell apart. In 1976 Talabani established the PUK while in exile in Syria, and was the first to return *pesh mergas* to Iraq. Mulla Mustafa's two sons Idris and Massoud remained active in some splinter groups of the old KDP relying on tribal ties as the basis of their support. In 1979, they reassumed the party title of KDP. After Idris died of a heart attack in 1979, Massoud assumed complete control of the party. Ironically, the two rival parties both adopted the same old KDP slogan- "Autonomy for Kurdistan, Democracy for Iraq."<sup>62</sup>

## F. THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

During the Iran-Iraq War, the traditional KDP fought for Iran. The more secular PUK wavered between both sides not wanting to fight for Saddam, yet fearing fundamentalist Iran. When the war was going poorly for Iraq, in 1984, Baghdad tried to strike a deal with the PUK in exchange for their support. The concessions made by Saddam Hussein, were greater than those granted to Barzani in the 1970 agreement. Iraq agreed to allow an expanded autonomous area, which included

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<sup>60</sup> McDowall, pg. 336-339.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, pg. 33-34.

Kirkuk. There were to be free elections, and the region was to receive 25-30% of the Iraqi state budget. However this agreement was never signed because Turkey protested. Turkey who has been fighting with her own large Kurdish population, feared that an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan would aid Turkish Kurds, and the two might try to unite their land and create an independent Kurdistan.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Iraq who was dependent on the oil pipelines which go through Turkey for export, granted Turkey the right to cross the border to pursue any Kurdish guerillas.<sup>64</sup> The PUK then broke off relations with Baghdad and went to fight alongside Iran and the KDP. The two parties then combined, forming the Iraqi Kurdish Front (IKF).

#### G. THE ANFAL CAMPAIGNS<sup>65</sup>

It quickly became clear, that Saddam was going to retaliate against the Kurds for fighting alongside Iran. As early as July 1983, Iraqi troops rounded up between five and eight thousand males of the Barzani tribe, and bused them away. They were never seen again. When asked what happened to them Saddam declared "We meted out a stern punishment to them, and they went to hell."<sup>66</sup> After the war Saddam executed a series of harsh reprisals on the Kurds, in retaliation for

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<sup>63</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg 69-70.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The Arabic word *Anfal* means literally the spoils of war.

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth Roth, Federal Document Clearing House Congressional Testimony by Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Middle East before the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia on August 3, 1995, Federal Document Clearing House Congressional Testimony, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

their collaboration with Iran. These were conducted against *all* Kurds in Iraq, without differentiating between those who fought with Iran, and those who fought for Iraq. There were a series of eight campaigns between February and September 1988 in which Saddam swept from the southeastern corner of Iraqi Kurdistan to the northwestern corner demolishing Kurdish villages, fields, and ruthlessly murdering thousands of Kurds. During the campaigns the Kurds repeatedly fell victim to chemical weapons, had their homes burned, wells poisoned and filled with cement. The Kurds were victims of mass executions and were buried in mass graves, forcing thousands to flee to neighboring countries. Throughout the campaign, men were rounded up and sent to resettlement camps, arrested, or executed. Women and children were also arrested, sent to resettlement camps, executed, or dropped off in the middle of the desert. In every area attacked, the villages were completely razed.<sup>67</sup> It is estimated that over 4,700 villages were demolished, and over 180,000 civilians were killed with either conventional or chemical weapons.<sup>68</sup> The brutality of the campaigns is revealed in the orders issued to the defense minister which included the following points:

- The corp commanders shall carry out sporadic bombardments using artillery, helicopters and aircraft, at all times of the day or night, in order to kill the largest number of persons present in those prohibited zones, keeping us informed of the results.
- All persons captured in those villages shall be detained and interrogated by the security services and those between the ages of 15 and 70 shall be executed after any useful information has been obtained from them.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Roth.

<sup>68</sup> Holger Jenson, "Kurds Waging War with Three Enemies," Rocky Mountain News, Denver Publishing Company. May 14, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>69</sup> From documents captured in the 1991 Kurdish uprising; quoted by Aryeh Neier, "Putting Saddam Hussein on Trial," *The New York Review*, September 23, 1993, pg. 47.



Most of the information about the Anfal Campaigns was not recovered until after the Gulf War, "when Kurdish rebels took advantage of Saddam's defeat to seize large chunks of territory in Iraq's northern oil fields, including the cities of Kirkuk and Sulaymania."<sup>70</sup> The Kurds seized over four million documents, weighing over 18 tons, detailing the governments actions against its own citizens. They also uncovered several mass graves. In 1991, after the Gulf War, the Kurds were encouraged to rise up against Saddam by the United States. Many Kurds interpreted this encouragement as sign that the United States would offer support for their rebellion. As it has repeatedly happened throughout history, the Kurds lost when they bet on support from anyone other than themselves. The U.S. chose not to intervene, and the rebellion was crushed within three weeks.<sup>71</sup>

## **H. DESERT STORM**

Before Dessert Storm, the Kurds refused to fight with the allies against Saddam. They even said that they would take up arms against Turkey if she invaded from the north. However, Talabani did offer that "if the Arab forces liberate Kuwait, we would urge the Kurdish troops to join them," but he added that "...our fighting would be Kurdish, independent and separate, ...not...as part of foreign armies invading or fighting Iraq."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Jensen.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, pg. 49.

As the Kurds and the Shiites rose up against Saddam, he tried to negotiate with the Kurdish Front (both the KDP and the PUK). Initially Talabani negotiated with Baghdad, and the talks seemed to go well, as Saddam made several concessions, including agreeing to a democracy. The main obstacles to the peace, were the lack of an international guarantee of the agreement and division of oil revenues from Kirkuk. However, during the next stage of talks, in which Barzani represented the Front, the situation changed. Barzani stated that since Saddam had agreed to a democracy, he would support him, and international guarantees were not necessary. When asked what Saddam's view of democracy was, he answered

His excellency, the president has 24 years of experience in government. We believe that this is the best way to serve Iraq, the Baath Party, the government, and the Iraqi People.<sup>73</sup>

Concerning the Kurdish share of the oil from Kirkuk, he stated: "Oil, whether in KarKuk or other areas, belongs to the central government."<sup>74</sup> He stated that the only point of contention was defining the autonomous region. He further stated that "President Saddam Hussein has spoken about essential points and proved his love for the Kurds, his concern for the Kurdish problem, and the soundness of his treatment of its developments." During this period relations between the PUK and KDP grew more tense. Barzani continued to negotiate with Saddam even after the safe haven was declared, securing another autonomy agreement that was never signed. The primary reason it was never signed was that it required the Kurds to disband all of their *pesh mergas* and hand their arms over to Baghdad.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, pg. 61.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pg. 71.

## I. OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT

As Saddam crushed the rebellion, thousands of Kurdish refugees fled from Iraq. Over a million fled to Iran and 468,000 fled to Turkey.<sup>76</sup> To protect the Kurds from further retaliation and to stem the flow of refugees, the U.N. established a safe haven above the 36th parallel. The thousands of Kurds returned to their homes under the safety net provided.

The no-fly zone or safe haven was meant to be a temporary solution until Saddam was removed from power. The Kurds were left in their own safe area, protected from Baghdad by UN forces. All Iraqi services were stopped and Saddam imposed his own embargo. Since then the Kurds have been in their own area, which is not an independent country or autonomous government. The Iraqi government has had no control over the area. For over five years now, this temporary condition has persisted. Since there was no government with actual authority over the area, the Kurds took advantage of the opportunity to form their own. In the spring of 1992, elections were held and the two main political parties in the area each won about 50 percent of the parliamentary seats. Each party had hoped to win a decisive victory, yet the KDP received 50.22% of the votes and the PUK received 49.78%.<sup>77</sup> The Kurdish parliament made Erbil its capital.

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<sup>76</sup> Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, pg. 54.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pg. 92.

## **J. RELATIONS WITH TURKEY**

As a result of the Gulf War, Turkey developed close relations with the Iraqi Kurds, especially with the KDP along their border. Ozal even stated that

Those in the Iraqi Kurdish area, are relatives of our Turkish citizens. So the borders are to some extent artificial, dividing people into two sections.<sup>78</sup>

This was ironic coming from a country which until recently did not have Kurds, just Mountain Turks. There were several reasons Turkey decided to support the Kurds and the UN enclave. If the Kurds were to become dependent upon Turkey, then they would be susceptible to Turkish influences and less likely to support the Turkish Kurds. They also sought to dissuade the Iraqi Kurds from desiring independence, and most of all, they felt that their goodwill and strong support for the Kurds would reflect favorably on them in the west, and could help Turkey's chances of joining the European Union. The PUK never formed a close tie with Turkey, because they receive their support from Syria and Iran, who also support the Turkey's Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), who the Turkish government has been fighting a civil war with for the past 12 years.

## **K. CIVIL WAR IN THE NO-FLY ZONE**

The PUK and KDP fell out once again in 1993 and the two parties have sporadically been in armed conflict ever since, while forces from the U.S., Britain, France and Turkey fly overhead to protect them. It is estimated that there have been over five thousand deaths since the resumptions

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<sup>78</sup> Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, pg. 107.

of hostilities.<sup>79</sup> There have been numerous truces, however the vast majority have just been words without substance.

There are two main disputes which the parties have not been able to resolve. The main conflict between the two parties results from the division of revenues from oil trucks smuggling oil out of Iraq into Turkey. These revenues are estimated to be at least \$150,000 per day.<sup>80</sup> The KDP controlled the areas along the Turkish borders and it was the suspicion that they were hoarding the money which caused the two parties to resume fighting. The PUK control of Erbil remains the second main dispute between the two parties. The PUK claims that they invaded it in December 1994 to protect the Kurdish parliament from a pending KDP attack. The PUK claims that the parliament which has not met since November 1994, has been free to meet as it pleases.<sup>81</sup> The KDP refused to hand over any money to the parliament of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), while the PUK controls the city. The KDP claimed that as long as Erbil is controlled by the PUK, the parliament is not and cannot be free, and has demanded that the PUK withdraw from Erbil before they will discuss peace with the other party.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> "Iraqi Kurdish Rivals Blame Each Other For Collapse Of Truce," *Mideast Mirror*, May 17, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>80</sup> Jenson.

<sup>81</sup> "Iraqi Kurdish Rivals Blame Each Other For Collapse Of Truce."

<sup>82</sup> "Can The Iraqi Kurdish Rivals Bury The Hatchet?" *Mideast Mirror*, Vol. 9, No. 11, (June 13, 1995), [LEXIS/NEXIS].

## L. MEDIATION ATTEMPTS

Since the resumption of hostilities between the two parties there have been several attempts by other countries to broker for peace. In July 1994, the two parties met in Paris where they agreed to a wide range of provisions including free presidential elections for four year terms, financial reforms, armed forces structure, and even established KRG bureaus in New York City and Paris. However, they also agreed to offer political asylum to other Kurds as long as they did not use Iraqi Kurdistan as a base for cross border attacks. As Barzani and Talabani were preparing to travel to Paris to sign the agreement, Turkey canceled their transit visas and objected to the agreement stating that it was tantamount to establishing an independent Kurdish state, and instead encouraged the Iraqi Kurds to negotiate with Iraq.<sup>83</sup>

The United States, however, did not want the Kurds negotiating with Baghdad and as a result brokered the next significant round of talks in Washington D.C., in March 1995. A temporary cease fire resulted in April 1995. The two parties were unable to come to terms over the division of revenues or the demilitarization of Erbil and fighting resumed in July 1995. In August the U.S. brokered another round of talks in Drogheda.<sup>84</sup> This initially seemed successful, but Turkey also participated in the talks and at Turkish insistence a clause requiring the KDP to patrol the border was included in the agreement.

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<sup>83</sup> Michael M. Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 2, (Spring 1996), pg. 233-234.

<sup>84</sup> "US-Sponsored Iraqi Kurdish Peace Talks Open In Dublin On Wednesday," *Mideast Mirror*, Vol. 9, No. 151, (August 8, 1995), [LEXIS/NEXIS].

Before the agreement was signed the PKK (fearing the loss of its bases in Iraq which it used to stage raids against Turkish forces) attacked the KDP. The attack was also encouraged by Syria and Iran who support the PKK, in order to prevent the U.S. from gaining any further influence in the region. They hoped that the PUK would resume fighting with the KDP to assist the PKK with whom they have close ties.<sup>85</sup>

In October 1995, Tehran hosted talks between the KDP and the PUK however no conclusion was reached.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, another U.S. attempt in Salahaddin in November 1995 failed.<sup>87</sup> The two parties continued fighting back and forth, and a rough stalemate ensued.

#### **M. RECENT EVENTS**

In July the situation again changed. The PUK allowed Iranian troops to go after Iranian Kurds who had been using bases in its territory. In return the Iranians left behind a large cache of weapons, tipping the balance of power between the KDP and PUK towards the PUK. On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, Barzani asked Saddam to send in Iraqi troops alongside KDP *pesh mergas* to seize Erbil from

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<sup>85</sup> Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq," pg. 236-238.

<sup>86</sup> Dilip Hiro, "Tehran Courts Kurds To Mute US Influence," Inter Press Service, September 26, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>87</sup> "US Mediation Delegation Departs After Final Talks With Kurdish Parties," BBC Summary Of World Broadcasts, (Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan, Salah al-Din, In Arabic, 1800 GMT, November 18, 1995), November 20, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

PUK control.<sup>88</sup> On August 28<sup>th</sup>, Clinton warned Saddam not to move in forces, in response to Barzani's request. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, Clinton sent another warning. The same day Saddam, eager to reassume control of his territory dispatched 40,000 troops to fight alongside the KDP. The PUK was quickly decimated. The power struggle in Northern Iraq had finally ended. Because the Iraqi troops entered Kurdistan, the U.S. launched 44 cruise missiles at military sites in Southern Iraq, and extended the area of the no fly zone.<sup>89</sup> Currently over five thousand Kurdish refugees from Iraq are in the Philippines, awaiting entry into the United States. At the end of October, the United States mediated a cease fire between the PUK and the KDP in Ankara; yet the balance of power in Northern Iraq remains in the KDP's and Baghdad's favor. The recent events seriously undermined American efforts in the region, and raised a lot of speculation on the legitimacy of the US presence.

With the formation of the Kurdish safe haven after the Gulf War, the Kurds have come as close as they ever have before to having an independent, or autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan. At the same time, their inability to bury age old differences and pursue a common goal has made a travesty of an opportunity. United, they might have had a chance to stand. Divided, they will surely fall.

Their continued fighting has also shown inhabitants of Iraqi Kurdistan that there is nothing "safe" about a UN safe haven. The situation in Iraq raises questions about the role UN forces are playing in Iraq. If the military is going to be used to keep peace in an area, they need to be able to do more than just watch the local belligerents kill each other.

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<sup>88</sup> Johanna McGeary, "Slamming Saddam Again: The U.S. Claims Victory as the Dictator is Pummeled by Missiles. But There's More Than One War Going On," *Time*, Vol. 148, No. 13, (September 16, 1996), pg. 32-38.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



The Kurds owe the existence of their enclave to the West, and they know it. The Kurds are not in a strong position. They are in limbo. They are not exactly part of Iraq, yet they are not exactly independent. The Western powers are responsible for this temporary situation lasting over five years with no end in sight. The decision needs to be made as to what will happen next. It seems unlikely that the no-fly zone will disappear as long as Saddam remains in charge of Iraq. It is also unlikely that this experiment in autonomy will ever develop into a nation. If the countries involved had been inclined to allow it, then it would have already happened. However, as long as the Kurds in Iraq remain incapable of transcending their own power struggles, they continue to be their own worst enemy.



### III. THE KURDS IN TURKEY

Modern Turkey was founded on the principles of Ataturk, but his legacy is now threatened by the Kurds. The struggle between the Turkish government and its Kurdish population threatens to tear apart one of the United States' key allies. For a dozen years, a virtual civil war has raged in Southeastern Turkey between the Turkish government and the Kurds. The conflict, largely concealed from the rest of Turkey and the world, has no end in sight. There are allegations, on both sides of human rights abuses which rival those in Bosnia, and which threaten Turkey's admittance into the European Union.

The Kurds in Turkey are a large minority. Their number makes them a minority that can not be ignored. Despite their undeniable presence, no country has been so preoccupied with the eradication of the Kurdish national identity as Turkey. Ever since Ataturk defined the Turkish borders, the ethnic identity of the Kurds has been denied. Although Kurds also inhabit regions of Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the former Soviet Union, these nations have never denied the existence of a distinct Kurdish ethnicity. The attitude in Turkey is that if you are a citizen of Turkey, you are Turkish, therefore you should only speak, write and be taught Turkish. Nothing else will be allowed. Officially, there were no Kurds, only "Mountain Turks."

The Turkish government has tried several different policies to placate the Kurds. However, their policies have always, and still are a combination of assimilation, force, and denial. Kurds are welcome to assimilate, and participate fully in all aspects of Turkish life and government; on one condition, they must be Turkish and therefore forgo their Kurdishness. Ever since Ataturk, the

primary policy has been denial of any ethnic differences between those living in Turkey. Prime Minister Nihat Erim rationalized this view in a 1971 speech stating,

We accept no other nation as living in Turkey, only the Turks. As we see it, there is only one nation in Turkey: the Turkish nation. All citizens living in different parts of the country are content to be Turkish.<sup>90</sup>

The Turkish government's final policy has been to use force to maintain control over their restless Kurds, or rather to control the traitorous Turks living in the Southeast, who call themselves Kurds.

The Ottoman empire was undeniably repressive and backwards. As a multi-national empire, it obviously discouraged nationalism, in favor of allegiance to the empire and the Sultan. However, this policy failed. The Ottoman Empire was fragmented and Turkey was born under the authoritarian rule of the ultra-nationalist Kemal Ataturk, who was determined to drag the Turkish nation into the Twentieth Century. Ataturk was obsessed with creating a modern, and therefore a European state. To this end, the Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Latin one, and the traditional dress was outlawed. History was rewritten, denying the Turkic Asian origin. Anatolia was made a cradle of civilization, which was credited with creating toolmaking, writing, and urbanization. The Sun Theory<sup>91</sup> of languages was created after attempts to purify the language from foreign words failed. Perhaps if the new state Ataturk created had been called Anatolia, instead of being named after the

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<sup>90</sup> Hyman, pg. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Ataturk initially attempted to purify the Turkish language of foreign words. However as Ataturk attempted to modernize, many non-Turkish words for the new technologies inevitably entered the vocabulary. Instead of creating new Turkish words, the Sun Theory was created. It asserted that Turks had been the original inventors of language, and therefore all other languages were derived from Turkish, and therefore their words were not really foreign, because their origin was Turkish. As late as the 1970's, Turkish intellectuals were prosecuted for denying the validity of the Sun Theory, or the reconstructed Turkish history.

largest ethnic group in the area, things would be different. However, the state of Turkey was born, based upon the pillars of Ataturk.<sup>92</sup>

Under these conditions, a large minority promoting their own separate history and culture became a threat. Their presence as a separate group became a challenge to Turkish nationalism, and the very existence of the Turkish state. Since one of the principle reasons given by the allies after World War I for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, was the many different nationalities and their rebellions. It is therefore understandable that any nationalist tendencies other than Turkish nationalism were stifled or outlawed. Therefore Kurdish dress, music, dance and any other cultural expression was prohibited. It was illegal to speak Kurdish, even in the privacy of the home, and any assertion of a separate Kurdish history or culture became treason. Kurds were officially declared "Mountain Turks, who had forgotten their language."<sup>93</sup>

#### **A. SHAYKH SAID REBELLION**

On March 3, 1924, less than a year after signing the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey issued an official decree banning "all Kurdish schools, organizations, and publications, along with their religious fraternities and seminaries."<sup>94</sup> This decree, coupled with Ataturk secular programs, specifically the abolition of the caliphate caused the first major uprising since Shaykh Obeydollah.

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<sup>92</sup> The pillars included: republicanism, nationalism (not based on religion or race, but a common citizenship), populism, etatisme, secularism, and revolutionism.

<sup>93</sup> Ciment, pg. 106-109.

<sup>94</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 61.

Loyalty to the Sultan, like the Czar of the Russian Empire was supposed to transcend loyalty to nations, and had worked as a unifying force for all Muslims in the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. However when this bond was severed, relations between the Kurds and the Turks quickly deteriorated.

Shaykh Said was an ardent Kurdish nationalist and was the son of a hereditary chief of the Naqshbandi dervishes. In 1925 he led a rebel force of an estimated fifteen thousand men demanding the restoration of Islam and an independent Kurdistan.<sup>95</sup> Shaykh Said managed to take control of several southeastern provinces. There is some dispute as to whether this rebellion was primarily a religious movement in response to Ataturk's secularization, or a purely nationalist movement. Regardless, the effectiveness of his rebellion was hindered by several factors, primarily tribal rivalries and urban-rural cleavages. The Turkish government turned to its allies for help in halting the uprising. In order to reach the rebels in eastern Anatolia, Ankara received permission from the French to use the Baghdad railway.<sup>96</sup> The Turkish army along with bombing conducted by the British Royal Air Force squelched the rebellion. On September 4, 1925, Shaykh Said and 52 other rebel leaders were hanged in Diyarbakir.<sup>97</sup>

The significance of this rebellion is that it caused the Turkish government to adopt harsh methods to suppress the rebellion and any future uprisings. The government depopulated several districts, destroyed villages and murdered civilians. Furthermore, the government sought to weaken

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<sup>95</sup> Entessar, pg. 83.

<sup>96</sup> Hottinger.

<sup>97</sup>Robert Olson The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925. University of Texas Press, Austin.

the influence of the shaykhs by closing all the monasteries, shaykh tombs, and other pilgrimage sites throughout Turkey. This brutal response to Kurdish rebelliousness established a pattern that continues to this day.

## **B. THE MOUNT ARARAT UPRISING**

The next major uprising occurred in 1929, and was led by Nouri Pasha who demanded a unified secular Kurdistan. This rebellion was planned and fueled by a group of Kurdish aristocrats in exile in Syria and Lebanon, who had formed the Khoyboun Party (Independence Party) in 1927, and declared a Kurdish government in exile. During this revolt the rebels captured the area around Lake Van, on the Turkish-Iranian border. The Kurds were able to capture almost 2,000 Turkish prisoners, seize automatic weapons and artillery, and shoot down several planes.<sup>98</sup> The Kurds also worked closely with the Armenian independence group, the Dashnak, which obviously concerned the Turkish government. The rebels received support from and used Iran as base against the Turkish forces. Reza Shah allowed this in order to gain territorial concessions to the west of Lake Uromiyah. Since the Turkish government was unable to militarily quell the rebellion, they turned to diplomacy, and in 1930 they convinced Reza Shah to cut support to the Kurds, and to allow Turkish forces to cross the border to pursue the rebels. By the summer of 1930, the Kurdish forces were surrounded by forty five thousand Turkish troops and the rebellion was crushed. Several of the leaders, including Nouri escaped to Iran. The Turkish government was once again, harsh in its

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<sup>98</sup> Ciment, pg. 47.

dealings with the rebels that they did capture. There are reports that "Turkish military authorities reportedly arrested some one hundred Kurdish intellectuals in Van, sewed them in sacks, and threw them into Lake Van."<sup>99</sup>

There are several significant factors of this rebellion. First of all, this rebellion marked the first time a secular nationalist organization, like the Khoyboun led a Kurdish rebellion. For the first time it was not necessary for a Shaykh or an Agha to be the primary leader in order to gain widespread support. This struggle was a further departure from the religious or tribal revolts of the past, in that it was almost wholly a nationalist movement. Since the last rebellion, the repression by the Turkish government was aimed at weakening the Kurds. Instead it had the opposite effect. It actually helped unify the Kurds as the governments policies minimized the significance of tribal differences, and they turned to each other against the oppressors. This factor continues today in Turkey. Finally, the rebellion introduced Kurds to the frailty of alliances with neighbors.

### **C. SHAYKH SAYYED REZA REBELLION**

The next Kurdish uprising was in Turkey in 1936, and was led by Shaykh Sayyed Reza in Dersim, located in the northwestern region of Kurdistan. This revolt was able to transcend tribal boundaries and draw more support. After raising a force of about fifteen hundred men, Shaykh Reza began to attack visible symbols of Turkish authority. As the revolt spread, veterans of Shaykh Said's rebellion joined the guerrilla forces. The Kurds were finally forced to surrender after the "...massive

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<sup>99</sup> Entessar, pg. 85.



use of poison gas, artillery, and air bombardment,"<sup>100</sup> when they ran out of ammunition in 1938. This was the first genuine guerilla war fought by the Kurds of Turkey.<sup>101</sup> The Turkish forces were ruthless in their destruction, deporting and massacring entire villages. There are accounts of "...collective suicides of Kurdish villagers throwing themselves off cliffs, and women and girls drowning themselves in rivers from fear of rape."<sup>102</sup> The area remained under martial law until 1950, and in an attempt to eradicate the memory, the government replaced the name Dersim with Tunceli, and after this the "use of the words 'Kurdistan' and 'Kurds' was banned and references to them were removed from Turkish history books and publications."<sup>103</sup> Armed struggle did not resume in Turkish Kurdistan until the 1980's.

#### **D. FORMATION OF THE PKK**

The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) was founded in 1974 by Abdullah Ocalan while he was a student at the University of Ankara. It was a Marxist Leninist organization which advocated official recognition of the Kurdish language, Kurdish rights, and the formation of a Kurdish republic in Southeastern Turkey, with the ultimate goal being an independent Kurdistan. The PKK and its activities were forced underground following the military coup in 1980. They moved many of their

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<sup>100</sup> Entessar, pg. 86.

<sup>101</sup> Hottinger.

<sup>102</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg.62.

<sup>103</sup> Entessar, pg. 87.

activities to Europe, and set up bases in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, where they were trained by Palestinian guerillas.<sup>104</sup>

#### **E. ANKARA'S POLICY ON THE KURDS**

The 1982 constitution drafted by the military government continued to outlaw the Kurdish language. It became a criminal offense to speak or write the Kurdish language in either public or in private. Just the use of the terms "Kurd" or "Kurdish" remained outlawed.<sup>105</sup> Lawyers who defended a suspected member of the PKK were subject to arrest, as were any doctors who tended to one.<sup>106</sup> In 1983, the military turned governing back to the civilians. At this point the PKK started to return to Turkey. They regularly launched attacks from their bases in Iraqi Kurdistan on Turkish military installations and on Kurds who they thought cooperated with the government.

These attacks, out of Iraq, precipitated the 1983 invasion of Iraq by the Turkish military. The purpose of the invasion was to isolate the PKK and punish the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which controls the area along the border in Iraq, for helping the PKK. This invasion failed to meet its objectives and the attacks on southeastern Turkey actually increased. The Turkish army reacted by sending troops into the region to capture the PKK rebels, but the PKK attacks continued to increase, and by 1984 a civil war had erupted in southeastern Turkey.<sup>107</sup> Although Turkey has had

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<sup>104</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg 216.

<sup>105</sup> Teimourian.

<sup>106</sup> Entessar, pg 96.

<sup>107</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 216-217.

as many as 300,000 soldiers in southeastern Turkey, they have been unable to secure the peace.<sup>108</sup> Initially the Turkish Army was ill-prepared to fight any counter insurgency war, especially one in the mountains. The Turkish military was established to be a conventional army designed to protect NATO's southern flank from a Soviet invasion. The army was organized into large battalions and was trained to fight a standard battle campaign with a heavy reliance on fixed wing aircraft and tanks. In 1987, since the conventional tactics were not as effective against the PKK's guerrilla style, the Turkish army changed its tactics, and established elite strike forces of 500 men, along with rapid response Cobra helicopters. There are an estimated 10,000 PKK members, however the PKK claims that it has 50,000.<sup>109</sup> These guerillas have a life expectancy of only six months,<sup>110</sup> yet they have managed to keep 13 provinces under emergency rule since 1987.<sup>111</sup>

The fighting between the PKK guerillas and the Turkish troops has been most active in the warmer months. The Turkish army will generally retreat from the mountainous Kurdish regions just before winter, allowing the PKK to regroup and receive shelter from the Kurdish villages. In the

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<sup>108</sup> "Press Freedom Under Attack In Turkey," Swiss Review Of World Affairs, December 1, 1994, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>109</sup> Teimourian.

<sup>110</sup> "Turkeys Kurds; Scorched Earth," The Economist, June 11, 1994, pg. 47, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>111</sup> Gareth Smyth, "War Without End; Conflict Between Turkish Government and Separatist Kurds," New Statesman and Society, (Information Access Company), April 1, 1994, pg. 14, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

spring the PKK would launch their raids again, only to be beaten back by the more powerful Turkish forces until winter approached.<sup>112</sup>

In August 1992, Turkey began hitting PKK camps in Turkey and Northern Iraq with 12 to 20 F-16 air strikes daily. The PKK was able to fend off these strikes with anti-air weapons which they had stolen from Iraqi depots during the Gulf War. During this period the Turks were receiving their intelligence from various Kurdish fractions, each of which had its own score to settle against other Kurdish groups. As a result, the air attacks seldom struck PKK targets and usually hit civilians. As more of the Kurdish land was destroyed by these air strikes, the resentment towards the Turkish government grew. By October 1992, despite the extensive air strikes, the PKK had grown enough in strength, to allow them to attack in groups of about 300, as opposed to smaller raids.<sup>113</sup>

Turkey responded in November 1992 with another cross border offensive against PKK bases in Iraq involving over 20,000 Turkish troops.<sup>114</sup> In addition to the Turkish forces, the KDP attacked the PKK bases as well. Turkey occupied an area up to 18 miles deep into Iraq for one month. The attack was relatively successful with 400 PKK guerillas killed and 1,000 placed under house arrest. However, the Turkish government allowed house-arrested PKK members to retain their weapons and

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<sup>112</sup> "Turkey and the Kurds: Ethnic Cleansing," *The Economist*, December 17, 1994, pg. 52, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>113</sup> Tammy Arbuckle, "Winter Campaign in Kurdistan," *International Defense Review*, (Jane's Information Group Limited), February 1, 1995, pg. 59, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>114</sup> David C. Morrison, "Turkish War a Concern for America," *The National Journal*, April 15, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

allowed the KDP to guard them. The KDP, which was only half heartedly cooperating with the Turkish government, allowed most of these prisoners to escape.<sup>115</sup>

As a result of the invasion, the PKK was severely damaged and largely cut off from their bases in Northern Iraq. On the 20th of March 1993, Ocalon called for a cease fire and requested negotiations with the Turkish government. Furthermore, in order to obtain political ground, he adopted a more conservative stance, watering down the PKK demands for a separate Kurdish state. The Turkish government, fearing any cooperation would legitimize the PKK, refused to negotiate with the rebels. Instead, they opted to crush the rebellion with the military, alienating moderate Kurds. Since the Ankara did not recognize this PKK declared cease fire, they continued operations against the PKK.

On May 24th 1993, a regional group of PKK rebels ambushed and killed 38 Turkish soldiers, ending the cease fire. This ambush sparked further Kurdish insurgence and the number of PKK attacks increased. From this point, until May 1994, the PKK was able to dominate the Turkish forces in southeastern Turkey. With Turkish forces unable to cover all Southeastern Turkey, the PKK successfully increased the area they controlled. The PKK was familiar with the terrain and the well trained rebels maintained excellent discipline. On the other hand, the conscript Turkish army was experiencing problems with their discipline. In the fall of 1993, the PKK made deals with some Armenian militias allowing them to cross the border freely, greatly enhancing their mobility. At this point the PKK, started returning to their bases in Northern Iraq.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Arbuckle.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

In the spring of 1994, the Turkish forces intensified their offensive against the insurgents. The Turkish Air Force increased the number and sizes of air strikes on the Kurdish regions. In addition, Ankara had learned which Kurdish factions could be trusted, therefore increasing the accuracy of their intelligence allowing their air strikes to be much more accurate. This constant bombardment did not go completely unnoticed by the neighboring nations. One air strike, involving 40 F-16s along the Iran-Iraq border successfully obliterated PKK bases in the area. No Turkish planes were lost to PKK anti-air fire, however 9 Iranians were killed by bomb fragments. The Turkish government was forced to apologize and pay compensation.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to the increased air strikes, the Turkish Army changed their tactics. The government increased its troop strength in Southern Turkey to 240,000 and went on the offensive against the PKK guerillas. Instead of waiting for PKK bands entering from Iraq to reach them, they based their troops directly on the border. In this manner, they were able to sneak behind the PKK bands as they entered Turkey and push them deeper into Turkish territory, cutting off their escape routes back over the Iraqi border, and surrounding them.<sup>118</sup>

The Turkish forces also adopted a scorched earth policy, destroying friendly PKK villages and moving the inhabitants into collective villages. Before this point, there were an estimated 5,000 Kurdish villages throughout this area where the PKK was able to recruit, seek shelter, and receive

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<sup>117</sup> Arbuckle.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

supplies and information.<sup>119</sup> To date, over 2,650 of these villages have been destroyed.<sup>120</sup> The Turkish military was also augmented by maintaining the gendarme conscripts an additional three months. The gendarme is deployed nationwide and is responsible for policing the rural areas outside municipal boundaries. These gendarme forces, which are trained the same as the Turkish soldiers are equally effective against the Kurds. Moreover the gendarmes set up camps in the villages where they stayed over the winter. This denied the PKK rebels the opportunity to find shelter and regroup during the winter months.<sup>121</sup>

#### **F. THE VILLAGE GUARD SYSTEM**

At this point the Turkish government started setting up Village Guards of Kurds loyal to the Turkish government to protect the villages from the PKK rebels. The Villages Guard members are considered traitors by the PKK; therefore the members as well as their families are often targeted for execution. On the other hand, there were reports that the Turkish government would arrest or burn down the homes of any Kurds who refused to join the Village Guard, and failing to join the Village

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<sup>119</sup> Arbuckle.

<sup>120</sup> House Concurrent Resolution 136 [Online]  
<http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:HC00136:>.

<sup>121</sup> "Turkey and the Kurds: Ethnic Cleansing."

Guard branded the Kurd as either a PKK member or supporter.<sup>122</sup> This no win situation contributed to the exodus of Kurds from the rural areas into the cities and other countries.

Turkey's scorched earth policy alienated moderate Kurds. Many Kurds who had their villages destroyed flowed into the PKK training camps in Syria. It is estimated that about 100 Kurds arrive at these camps weekly, of which about 35 percent return as PKK fighters<sup>123</sup> equalizing the number of PKK fighters killed by the Turkish forces.

The collective villages, like the strategic hamlets the U.S. set up in Vietnam, are ineffective at keeping the PKK guerrillas out. The PKK needs to only maintain a single cell in the village in order to terrorize it and politicize it. These collective villages make easy targets for the guerillas, and in order to protect them the army is forced to turn them into prison like compounds further alienating the inhabitants, allowing the PKK to capitalize on the living conditions.<sup>124</sup>

#### **G. KURDISH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ARRESTED**

In 1994, the Turkish parliament voted to lift the political immunity of 13 parliamentary members who belonged to the Kurdish Democracy Party (DEP). These deputies, because they were Kurdish, were considered to be PKK supporters. Within weeks the constitutional court outlawed the DEP, and charged the delegates who remained in the country with spreading separatist

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<sup>122</sup> Conor Foley, "Letter From Kurdistan; Kurds Flee Turkey To Iraq," New Statesman and Society, (Information Access Company), June 24, 1994, pg. 11, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>123</sup> Arbuckle.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.



propaganda. In December 1994, six of these parliamentary members were sentenced with prison terms ranging from three to fifteen years.<sup>125</sup> This move effectively shut the Kurds out of the political processes. Any Kurdish political party since then has been outlawed by the government, and many Kurds have turned their support to the Islamic party.

## **H. OPERATION STEEL AND FOREIGN RESPONSE**

On March 20, 1995 the Turkish army launched an invasion named Operation Steel into Northern Iraq after PKK guerrillas. The 35,000 troops used in this operation, made this the largest deployment of forces beyond Turkish borders. The army occupied an area 40 km deep into Iraqi territory along the entire length of the border. At the end of April, they withdrew 23,000 troops and the remaining were withdrawn a week later. During the six week operation, 550 PKK guerillas and 61 Turkish soldiers were killed.<sup>126</sup> Operation Steel effectively destroyed much of the PKK infrastructure and supply chain and allowed the Turkish authorities to obtain valuable intelligence. Although this operation was very effective at destroying the PKK camps and infrastructure, most of the guerrillas fled the area before the attack, leaving the onslaught to the civilians in the area.

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<sup>125</sup> John Doxey, "Turkeys Embattled Secularist: Turmoil in the Republic," *The New Leader*, (Information Access), March 13, 1995, pg. 6, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>126</sup> James Wyllie, "Turkey," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, (Jane's Information Group Limited), September 16, 1995, Vol. 24, No. 11, Pg. 25, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

This invasion led to harsh condemnation of the Turkish government by several nations. Germany announced a suspension of \$107 million worth of military aid.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, the Clinton administration, expressed "...understanding for Turkey's need to deal decisively with the PKK."<sup>128</sup>

The U.S. Congress was harsher in criticizing Turkey's latest incursion into Iraq. Both the House and the Senate introduced resolutions "condemning Turkey's illegal invasion of Northern Iraq."<sup>129</sup> House Resolution 124 and Senate Resolution 91 were virtually identical. Both bills point out Turkey's responsibilities as a member of various international agreements and cite independent international observations of civilian deaths, the governments torture of prisoners and the forced evacuation and destruction of villages. They deplore the increases in human rights abuses and the "...illegal use of torture, excessive force, and political and extrajudicial killings of non-combatants."<sup>130</sup>

Both resolutions resolve to condemn the invasion as "an illegal act of aggression and violation of international law, inconsistent with Turkey's obligations under the Charter of the United

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<sup>127</sup> John Rossant, John Doxey, and Amy Borrus, "Turkey May Have Bought Itself a World of Trouble," *Business Week*, (Mc Graw-Hill Inc.), April 10, 1995, pg. 57, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>128</sup> "Time To Talk Turkey, Turkey's War on Kurds Should Threaten its Alliance With the US," *The New Republic*, (Information Access Company), April 24, 1995, pg 9, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>129</sup> House Resolution 124 of the 1st session of the 104th Congress, March 30, 1995, [Online] <http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:HR00124:>.

<sup>130</sup> Senate Resolution 91 of the 1st Session of the 104th Congress, March 23, 1995, [Online] <http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:SE00091:>.

Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty and other international agreements.”<sup>131</sup> The resolutions called upon the President as well as the United Nations Security Council to also condemn the invasion. They also denounced Turkey’s “human rights violations against ethnic Kurds”<sup>132</sup>, and the terrorist acts of the PKK. Both resolutions reaffirmed their support of Operation Provide Comfort. Virtually the only difference between the two resolutions was that the House Resolution called upon the “...European Parliament to reject the ratification of the proposed customs union agreement between the Government of Turkey and the European Union unless the Government of Turkey complies with international human rights standards.”<sup>133</sup>

Both houses expressed harsh criticism for Turkey’s invasion. Senator Pell, the sponsor of SR 91 reaffirmed that “the official United States position is that Turkey faces a legitimate threat from the Kurdish Workers Party.”<sup>134</sup> However, he denounced the invasion as “no less a violation of international law than Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.”<sup>135</sup> Despite the strong language of the resolutions, neither bill was ever voted on in either the House or the Senate, and the bills died.

In July 1995, Turkey again invaded Iraq, sparking protest not only from the international community but also from the KDP who was not warned of the attack in advance.<sup>136</sup> This time they

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<sup>131</sup> Senate Resolution 91 of the 1st Session of the 104th Congress.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> House Resolution 124 of the 1st session of the 104th Congress.

<sup>134</sup> Remarks by Senator Pell to the Senate, March 23, 1995, pg. S4517, [Online] <http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/1?r104:/temp/~r104umWA:>.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> “Syria Proposes New Iraqi Opposition Umbrella As Alternative To The INC,” *Mideast Mirror*, Vol. 9, No. 128, (July 6, 1995), [LEXIS/NEXIS].

occupied the area for only one week, killing 167 PKK rebels and losing only 26 soldiers.<sup>137</sup> The U.S. again supported this invasion, saying that any country has the right to protect itself with force from attacks out of a neighboring country, if that country does not have the power or the will to stop the use of its territory for attacks.<sup>138</sup>

## **I. PKK AS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION**

The PKK is not an innocent victim. They are responsible for terrorist attacks on civilians throughout Turkey and in Europe. They are equally ruthless against Kurds who do not support them. On August 27, 1995 the PKK attacked the KDP in an attempt to sabotage the cease fire signed between the KDP and the PUK. Turkey was represented at the signing of the cease fire between the KDP and the PUK, and the agreement contained clauses for both parties to stop aiding the PKK and also required the KDP to patrol the national boundaries of Turkey, and not allow the PKK to cross freely. This cease fire confirmed to the PKK, that the KDP was collaborating with Ankara to combat the PKK.<sup>139</sup>

On December 14, 1995, Ocalan declared another cease fire with the Turkish forces and the KDP, once again called for a political solution and requested negotiations with the Turkish

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<sup>137</sup> Alistair Bell, "Turkey Finishes Week-Long Incursion In Iraq," Reuters Limited, July 11, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>138</sup> "US Warns Iraqi Kurds It Will Wield Stick If They Don't Cease Fighting," *Mideast Mirror*, Vol. 9, No. 130, (July 10, 1995), [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>139</sup> Nadire Mater, "Iraq-Kurdistan: Iraqi Kurds Reel Under Attacks From Resurgent PKK," Inter Press Service, September 1, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

government or mediation by a third party. Ocalon set no expiration date for the cease fire, yet he stated, "I have good intentions but if the cease-fire fails I will turn a tourist paradise into hell."<sup>140</sup> This cease fire comes following the hardest year for the PKK since the Kurdish insurrection began in 1984. In 1995 alone, the PKK lost 5,335 members, close to half the number lost since its conflict with the Turkish government began. It is estimated that 1,393 were killed by the KDP and 3,942 were killed by the Turkish forces in Turkey and Iraq.<sup>141</sup> The Turkish government now has over 300,000 troops stationed in the southeast to keep the peace.<sup>142</sup>

## **J. EFFECTS OF TURKEY'S CIVIL WAR**

### **1. Migration**

As more Kurds flee from the collective villages and their destroyed homelands the influx of refugees had created problems as the cities cannot grow fast enough to accommodate them. For example, Diyarbakir, the regional capital which had only 380,00 residents in 1990, has now grown to over 1.5 million.<sup>143</sup> The city is poorly equipped to handle the refugees; the city's largest factory

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<sup>140</sup> Hugh Pope, "Kurdish Rebels Call Truce and Seek Talks With Turkey," *The Independent*, (Newspaper Publishing PLC), December 16, 1995, pg. 12, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>141</sup> "Army Official says Kurdish Rebels' Cease Fire is Attempt to Regroup," TRT TV, Ankara, in Turkish, 1800 GMT, 17 January 1996, (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, January 19, 1996), [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>142</sup> "Press Freedom Under Attack," *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, December 1, 1994, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>143</sup> "Turkey and the Kurds: Ethnic Cleansing."

can only employ 150 workers.<sup>144</sup> As a result there is massive unemployment, since most of the refugees are farmers. This influx of refugees has also increased the number of urban bombings. In addition it is estimated that over 8,000 Kurds have fled into Iraq,<sup>145</sup> and that over 25 percent of the 1.8 million Turkish citizens in Germany are thought to be Kurds.<sup>146</sup>

## **2. Economic**

The conflict between the Turkish government is estimated to cost the Turkish government \$8 billion to \$10 billion annually, draining almost 35 percent of the nation's revenues.<sup>147</sup> Inflation runs rampant at around 180 percent, and in 1994 industrial production fell back 7.6 percent.<sup>148</sup> Due to the number of bombings by the PKK, tourism in Turkey dropped by over a third in 1994, which previously had been a lucrative source of revenue.<sup>149</sup> The fighting has cost the Turkish government not only financially, but it has also damaged Turkey politically, both domestically and internationally.

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<sup>144</sup> John Doxey, "Caught Between the Iraq Embargo and a Kurdish Quagmire," *Business Week*, (Mc Graw-Hill Inc.), May 8, 1995, pg. 5, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>145</sup> Foley.

<sup>146</sup> Teimourian.

<sup>147</sup> Edward Mortimer, "Between Allah and Ataturk; Turkey Faces Crisis on Many Fronts," *World Press Review*, July 1995, pg. 12, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>148</sup> Michael Elliot, "The Sick Man Coughs Again," *Newsweek*, April 17, 1995, pg. 55, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>149</sup> Teimourian.

### **3. Foreign Relations**

The battle in southeastern Turkey has affected Turkey's relations with other states in the area. Although Iran has promised not to harbor PKK rebels, and has even turned over some to the Turkish government in the past, it tends to turn a blind eye to the aid the PKK receives from Iran's own Kurdish population. There are allegations that the Iranian government directly supports the PKK since Tehran is no fan of Turkey's secular policies, and the Kurds tend to be more fundamental in practicing religion. The Syrian government clearly supports the rebels in an attempt to gain some leverage with Ankara, to minimize the consequences of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), Turkey's plan to build a series of dams in the Kurdish region. The project would irrigate an area twice the size of Belgium,<sup>150</sup> and could seriously deplete the waters of the Euphrates flowing into Syria. Ocalon himself resides in Syria where many PKK training camps are located.

### **4. Arm Sales and Foreign Aid**

The U.S. supplies Turkey with 80 percent of its military equipment, most of which is used to suppress the Kurdish insurrection. Since the fighting began, the U.S. has given over \$5.3 billion to Turkey, making it the third largest recipient of aid after Israel and Egypt.<sup>151</sup> In the last two years, \$364.5 million in military aid has been granted, of which 10 percent has been forfeited because it

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<sup>150</sup> Teimourian.

<sup>151</sup> Jon Stewart, "Turkish Hammers and Kurdish Nails," Chicago Tribune, February 26, 1996, pg. 13, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

was linked to the situation in Cyprus and human rights improvements.<sup>152</sup> In 1994, Turkey was the largest importer of weapons in the world.<sup>153</sup>

This year Amnesty International called for all countries to halt military transfers to Turkey until it improves its human rights record<sup>154</sup>. The State Department defends the sale of arms to Turkey, saying "The U.S. sees nothing objectionable in a friendly or allied country using American weapons to secure internal order or repel an attack against its territorial unity."<sup>155</sup> U.S. and European companies have over \$400 million worth of contracts pending with Turkey for helicopters alone this year. Turkey received 45 Black Hawks, worth \$419 million from Sikorsky Air in the last year and has agreed to purchase six Seahawks. In 1993, Turkey purchased twenty AS-532 Cougars from Paris based Eurocopter and is currently negotiating the purchase of another thirty. Turkey has also bought ten Super Cobras from Bell Helicopter Textron in Texas and is currently negotiating buying another ten worth \$145 million.<sup>156</sup>

## **5. Accusations of Human Rights Abuses**

The U.S. State Department classifies the PKK as a terrorist organization. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the U.S. Congressional Commission on Security and

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<sup>152</sup> "Two Faced Beauty On the Bosphorus," Swiss Review Of World Affairs, February 1, 1995, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>153</sup> Stewart.

<sup>154</sup> "Turkey: Amnesty International Calls for Halt to Helicopter Transfers," January 14, 1995, [Online] [http://www.oneworld.org/amnesty/ai\\_turkey\\_jan16.html](http://www.oneworld.org/amnesty/ai_turkey_jan16.html).

<sup>155</sup> Morrison.

<sup>156</sup> Umit Enginsoy, "Sales to Turkey To Continue: Copter Firms Undaunted by Amnesty Group Plea," Defense News, (The Times Journal Company), January 22, 1996/January 28, 1996, pg. 12, [LEXIS/NEXIS].



Cooperation in Europe have all condemned Turkish forces for violations of human rights. The Amnesty International report sparked criticism by the Turkish government because it was not harsh enough in condemning the PKK saying they were responsible for only 70 deaths of civilians in 1995. Moreover, they objected to the language of the report referring to the PKK led terrorism as a war, and referring to the PKK supporters who have been arrested, as prisoners of war.<sup>157</sup>

The PKK has repeatedly called for investigations of human rights abuses and the International Red Cross has asked to come into the area, but the Turkish government will not allow them.<sup>158</sup> The UN working group on Arbitrary and Enforced Disappearances received more reports on "disappearances" from Turkey than any other nation.<sup>159</sup>

## **6. Freedom of Speech**

In 1991, President Ozal amended laws allowing private use of the Kurdish language, but Kurdish is still not allowed in writing or broadcasting nor is it taught in the schools.<sup>160</sup> Any public expression of the Kurdish language is punishable under laws of sedition which can carry a death sentence.<sup>161</sup> However Turkey also tries to control what is reported in other languages. Turkey currently has more journalists in prison than any other country. Any coverage of the conflict with

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<sup>157</sup> "Turkey Criticizes Amnesty International's View of Kurd Organization," Anatolia News Agency Ankara, in English, 1500 GMT, 26 Dec 95, (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts), January 31, 1996, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>158</sup> "Press Freedom Under Attack In Turkey."

<sup>159</sup> "Turkey: Amnesty International Calls for Halt to Helicopter Transfers."

<sup>160</sup> Teimourian.

<sup>161</sup> "Time To Talk Turkey, Turkey's War on Kurds Should Threaten its Alliance With the US."

the PKK that diverges from the official army version of events is labeled separatist propaganda and is banned. Most of the journalists were jailed for violation of Article 8 of the anti-terrorism law.<sup>162</sup> Article 8 made separatist propaganda an imprisonable offense “irrespective of the method and aims.”<sup>163</sup> Turkey has been pressured to make progress with their human rights record after the European Parliament made it a condition to the Customs Union between Turkey and the European Union. Attention became focused on changing Article 8 as a minimum gesture to meet the conditions. In October 1995, Article 8 was amended slightly, yet separatist propaganda was still an imprisonable offense even if violence was not advocated. Moreover the amendment contained no means to secure the release of people imprisoned under the old law. Amnesty International stated “We can find little to applaud in changes which leave intact legislation under which people can be jailed for expressing non-violent opinions.”<sup>164</sup> Despite the change to Article 8, there has been no decrease in the amount of journalists arrested. Now most are imprisoned for violation of Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code with covers various forms of incitement.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> “Turkeys Oppressed Media,” *The Economist*, September 2, 1995, pg. 10, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

<sup>163</sup> “Turkey: Disappointing Legal Changes Will Not Restore Freedom of Expression,” October 30, 1995, [Online]  
[http://oneworld.org/amnesty/ai\\_turkey\\_oct30.html](http://oneworld.org/amnesty/ai_turkey_oct30.html).

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> “Turkey: Disappointing Legal Changes Will Not Restore Freedom of Expression.”

## K. UNITED STATES POLICY

In January 1996, U.S. representatives from New Jersey and Maryland sponsored a resolution demanding an end to the conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurds, as well as an investigation of human right abuses in Southeastern Turkey. The resolution reports the death toll of over 20,000 and cites the insurrection as the cause of the displacement of over 3 million Kurds.<sup>166</sup> House Concurrent Resolution 136 expresses the sense of the Congress concerning resolution of the conflict between the Government of Turkey and Kurdish militants. The resolution, introduced on January 25, 1996 calls for

(1) the Government of Turkey to release all political prisoners, lift restrictions on free expression, declare a cease-fire and work towards peace, and take specified steps to further reduce the potential for future confrontation; (2) the President to encourage such Government to initiate steps to end the armed confrontation in Turkey and to support the provision of technical assistance to carry out this Act; (3) the Kurdish Workers Party to declare a cease-fire and restate support for resolution of the conflict through democratic means and within the framework of the territorial unity of Turkey; and (4) the International Committee of the Red Cross and other appropriate humanitarian and monitoring organizations, upon cessation of hostilities, to be given access to southeastern Turkey.<sup>167</sup>

In order to reduce the potential for further conflict the resolutions calls for Turkey: to allow participation of nonviolent political parties, to repeal the state of emergency in southeastern Turkey, to dismantle the Village Guard, to allow the Kurdish language on television, radio, print, music, and

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<sup>166</sup> House Concurrent Resolution 136

<sup>167</sup> House Concurrent Resolution 136 Digest [Online] <http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/D?d104:1:./temp/~d104Zvjx@@@D>.

other forms of media, and to allow Kurdish to be taught in the schools.<sup>168</sup> Representative Christopher Smith stated that “the inability of successive Turkish governments to resolve the Kurdish crisis remains an obstacle to improved ties and enables persistent human rights problems to stunt Turkey’s democratic development.”<sup>169</sup>

## **L. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Despite Turkey’s attempts to keep their conflict with the Kurds quiet and away from the eyes of the international community, reports and pictures of the war filter through Turkey’s censorship. Ankara does not want to damage its reputation or chances of becoming a member of the European Union with the situation in Southeastern Turkey. One bit of information which has recently damaged Turkey’s tarnished reputation is a series of photos showing Turkish soldiers posing with the decapitated heads of Kurdish guerillas. These photos appeared in European newspapers just two weeks before House Concurrent Resolution 136 was introduced. Although the photos reveal that some of the victims died by gunshot wounds, some of the bodies had their arms and legs bound, indicating they were captured alive by the supposedly elite Turkish unit, the Hakkari Mountain Commando Brigade.<sup>170</sup> To date no action has been taken toward the Turkish soldiers in the photo

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<sup>168</sup> House Concurrent Resolution 136 [Online]  
<http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:HC00136:>

<sup>169</sup> Christopher Smith, “Support Peace, Democracy, and Justice for All of Turkey’s Citizens,” Remarks in the House of Representatives, January 25, 1996, [Online]  
<http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/1?r104:./temp/~r104hVAG:>

<sup>170</sup> “Turkey Wants to Join the European Community, But Look What They Do to Humans,” [Online] <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~umponti0/turks.html>.

nor has any evidence that the photos were altered been put forward. Representative Steny Hoyer (One of the sponsors of H. Con. Res. 136) stated "These gruesome and despicable photos all too graphically underline the hatred and brutality fueling this conflict. But even more, the pictures reinforce the urgent need for reconciliation."<sup>171</sup>

The general feeling is that if these pictures were doctored for Kurdish propaganda, they would have been introduced before the European Parliament's vote to ratify Turkey's Customs Union with the European Union. The European Parliament agreed 343 to 149 to ratify the agreement on December 13, 1995.<sup>172</sup> The agreement is a key step towards full membership in the European Union. These pictures and other reports of human rights violation continue to raise doubts about Turkey's suitability as a member of the European Union.

#### **M. PKK AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY'S KURDS**

The PKK claims that it represents all the Kurds of Turkey, however, that is far from the truth. Although, Ankara's actions have alienated some Kurds, the terrorism of the PKK alienates others as well. Last year, a semi-official survey was conducted by the country's biggest business federation for the Chamber of Commerce. It was the first opinion poll after over a decade of conflict. More

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<sup>171</sup> Steny Hoyer, "Support Peace and Democracy in Turkey: Support House Concurrent Resolution 136," Remarks in the House of Representatives, January 31, 1996, pg. E132 [Online]  
[http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/1?r104Foga::+@ \(H.C.+136\)++@1\(H.+C.+136\)++@1\(H.+CON.+RES+136\)++@1\(House+Concurrent+Resolution+136\)++](http://rs9.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/1?r104Foga::+@ (H.C.+136)++@1(H.+C.+136)++@1(H.+CON.+RES+136)++@1(House+Concurrent+Resolution+136)++).

<sup>172</sup> "Turkey Wants to Join the European Community, But Look What They Do to Humans."

than 1,200 Kurdish speaking people, who considered themselves Kurds, were polled. Most did not actually want an independent Kurdistan, however nearly all of them wanted to see changes in the Turkish government. The most popular idea, favored by 43 percent of the respondents, was a Kurdish federation within the national boundaries of Turkey. Despite the recent losses, at the hands of the Turkish army, over three quarters felt that the Turkish army would not be able to defeat the PKK. One third of the respondents knew an active PKK fighter, yet the vast majority were ambivalent toward the PKK, and would oppose a PKK controlled federation.<sup>173</sup>

Turkey is strategically located at the conjunction of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. In an area of the world that seems to grow more unstable each day, Turkey plays an invaluable role as a stable and strong U.S. ally and a member of NATO. As a western oriented, democratic state, she is a model for other nations in the area. Unfortunately her outward facade is being ripped apart by her own internal and external struggle with the Kurds. The Kurdish conflict weighs heavily upon the pillars of Ataturk. Turkey has been incapable of stopping the unrest herself, yet her actions to stop the conflict by destroying the Kurds, threatens the western aid and support she needs to deal with the PKK. Turkey's methods of dealing with the PKK, including its refusal to negotiate a settlement, and its stubborn claim, that they do not have a problem with their Kurds; just with terrorists alienates both the West and the Kurds. The conflict has already had serious impacts on Turkey economically and politically, both domestically and internationally. If it continues, it may plunge Turkey further into chaos.

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<sup>173</sup> "Ask The Kurds," *The Economist*, August 12, 1995, pg. 46, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

Turkey has decided to pursue the use of force in order to bring the Kurds in line. Although Kurds remain welcome to assimilate themselves into Turkish society, the government's hard line policy on the southeast, compiled with its policy of denial of a separate Kurdish identity, alienates Kurds and makes the option of assimilation less likely to be the chosen path. Although the governments use of force was initially ineffective at subduing the rebels, they have successfully adapted their raids and training so that the Kurds are beginning to feel their might. However successful the Turkish army is at stopping raids and punishing rebels, they have failed at winning over the hearts and minds of all the Kurds. They are fighting the symptoms and not the disease. Crushing rebellions may stop then, but the Kurdish nationalist fervor which sparks the rebellions remains and even grows. Moreover the governments military solution only alienates moderate Kurds, which under different circumstances might choose the path of assimilation. The indifferent Kurd who suddenly finds his farmland and home destroyed by the military as it pursued PKK guerillas will naturally resent the government, and in the future might aid the guerillas or even join them. There is no denying that in Turkey, the government is clearly more powerful than the PKK. However the overwhelming application of force, is not always the only thing needed to win a war. If this were the case, then the PKK would have lost long ago. To end this war serious policy changes must be implemented by the Turkish government. For them to deny the existence of the Kurds is a more serious transgression than if the United States were to deny the large Hispanic population in our west.





#### **IV. THE KURDS IN IRAN**

Iranian Kurds are less dissentious for a number of historical and cultural reasons. The Kurdish language is closely related to Persian, and since the Kurds consider themselves to be the original inhabitants of the Iranian plateau, there is a special affinity between them. Unlike the situations in Iraq and Turkey, there has never been a prolonged struggle between the Kurds of Iran and the Iranian government. Moreover, Tehran has never tried to deny their existence, nor has it ever tried to systematically destroy them. The northwest region of Iran which the Kurds inhabit, is not an area that is rich in oil, like the Kurdish region in Iraq. Likewise, the region does not constitute a large portion of the nation's land, like the Kurdish region in Turkey. Therefore Iran enjoys a special advantage when playing the "Kurdish card." Tehran has a lot more leverage over its neighbors when inciting their Kurdish populations, and it has a lot less to lose if it alienates its own.

##### **A. AGHA SIMKO'S REVOLTS**

After World War I, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire created a power vacuum in the region. As a result, there were several intra-tribal wars which would occasionally erupt into larger scale conflict involving Iraq or Turkey. The most significant of these was the revolt of Ismail Ahgha Simko. Simko was the chief of the Shakkah tribe which controlled an area west of Lake Uromiyah. He overcame neighboring tribes under the banner of uniting an independent Kurdistan, and he managed to control most of Iranian Kurdistan from 1920 until 1924. However that area west of Lake

Uromiyah has a lot of Azeri-speaking Shi'as and Christian Assyrians who wanted no part of Simko's independent Kurdistan. Therefore, Simko's rule was periodically troubled with small battles between the Kurds and the Azeris.<sup>174</sup>

Reza Khan came to power in 1921 as commander in chief of the Iranian army. Under his command, the Iranian army gradually regained control over the Kurdish area. By 1924, Simko's army of 10,000 men had been reduced to less than 1,000. He surrendered, but was pardoned by the Iranian government. In 1925, when Reza Khan became Reza Shah, Simko pledged his loyalty to the new ruler. However, his fidelity was brief, and in 1926 he joined forces with two other Kurdish chiefs, Haji Agha of the Herki tribe and Bezzadeh of Mergever and Tergever in another Kurdish revolt. This revolt was quickly suppressed by the Iranian army and Simko was forced to flee to Turkey where he was arrested and jailed. After his release he returned to Iran in 1930. Anxious to reassert his power, he led another skirmish against Iranian forces near Oshnu. On June 21st he was killed, though exactly how is disputed. Some reports say he died in battle against the Iranian forces, while others say he was assassinated by the Iranian military after accepting their invitation to negotiate a settlement.<sup>175</sup>

The Simko revolts were the first modern attempts to establish a Kurdistan independent from Iran. However, it would be incorrect to regard Simko as primarily a Kurdish patriot. He enjoyed the support of some strong Kurdish tribes in Turkey, who fought alongside him, and he spoke of an independent Kurdistan; but he also fought against many other Kurdish leaders, who threatened his

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<sup>174</sup> Entessar, pg. 12.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., pg. 12-13.

power, as he feared Shaykh Mahmuds rise in Iraq. In addition, he held no ideological constraints against receiving aid from states or groups who opposed the prospect of Kurdish independence. At various points he received aid from the Kemalists in Turkey, the Bolsheviks, and at one point requested British support (they refused his request). Simko was mainly interested in power and plunder. He realized he could gain more property and power by joining with his neighboring Kurdish tribes and then revolting against the government, who was unable to control the area in the 1920's.<sup>176</sup> Although he was able to unify a large number of Kurds behind him, he is not necessarily remembered as a great leader and his passing was not mourned by many Kurds. It is said that he

carried out enough atrocities in his 15 year political life to place him alongside such historical villains as Atilla the Hun. In one instance, Simko persuaded the Assyrian minority of northern Kurdistan to send him a delegation to reach a mutual entente. He then treacherously killed every single member of the peace party, including the Assyrians' most revered patriarch, Mar Benyamin Sham'un, then over ninety years of age. He then proceeded to drink the patriarch's blood as a demonstration of his rage.<sup>177</sup>

It was this lack of government authority which allowed these revolts to happen, and after the central government was able to reassert its power in Kurdistan, support for the revolts diminished. When a state can not exercise control of its area, it is vulnerable to both internal domestic pressures, as well as external influences.

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<sup>176</sup>Kreyenbroek and Sperl, pg. 175-177.

<sup>177</sup> Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 57.

## B. UNDER REZA SHAH'S REGIME

Reza Shah quickly consolidated his power over Iran. He sought to instill a Persian national consciousness, while trying to modernize Iran. Following the example set by Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, he forbade education in any language other than Persian, and tried to impose a European style dress. Like Ataturk, he would refer to the Kurds as "Mountain Iranians," however the term *Kurd* was never banned as it was in Turkey, and his other measures met only limited success.<sup>178</sup> Ataturk had a profound influence on Reza Shah. The new ruler was impressed by Ataturk's success at unifying a multi ethnic society into a single state, bringing the tribes under the control of the government, and modernizing the country. Reza Shah tried to imitate Ataturk in Iran, however it was less developed than Turkey, so the measures were not as effective.

To tighten his control over the unruly Kurdish area, Reza Shah staffed the area with Persian and Azeri officials. This move increased the already fragile tensions between the ethnic groups. Further exacerbating relations between the Azeris and Kurds, some of the traditionally Kurdish areas were declared to be part of the Province of West Azerbaijan.<sup>179</sup>

Reza Shah's attempts to modernize Iran met with limited success in the Kurdish areas. The Kurdish economy relies heavily on tobacco which became a state monopoly under Reza Shah. Other than monopolizing the tobacco, Reza Shah's policies of modernization had little effect on Iranian Kurdistan. The estates of large landowners including the Waaf estates were seldom broken up

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<sup>178</sup> Entessar, pg. 13.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

(unlike the rest of Iran) allowing the traditional tribal Khans and religious Shaykhs to maintain their power bases. This had two significant effects on the region. First of all, Iranian Kurdistan was not integrated with the national economy and remained largely undeveloped.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, the government was able to maintain the support of the Kurdish tribal leaders, who were able to suppress any rebellions.

### C. DURING WORLD WAR II

The Allied occupation and the abdication of Reza Shah during World War II weakened the central government's control of the region. With the new Shah unable to assert his rule, the power of the tribal chiefs grew throughout Kurdistan. The Soviet army controlled northern Iran from Ushnaviyato to Miandoab. The British occupied southern Iran and had its forces settled around Kermanshah. The result was a power vacuum in the Kurdish areas from Mahabad to Saqqiz, which was in the Soviet sphere, but out of its direct control. It was in this atmosphere that the greatest challenge to Iranian sovereignty over Kurdistan was born.<sup>181</sup>

The Republic of Mahabad was an independent Kurdish enclave in Iranian Kurdistan, engineered and supported by the Soviets. The Soviets hoped to pressure the Iranian government into granting them economic sanctions and access to Gulf. They further aimed to annex Mahabad after the War. The Soviets also supported an independent Iranian Azerbaijan with the aim of uniting it

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<sup>180</sup> Entessar, Pg. 14.

<sup>181</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 103.

with Soviet Azerbaijan. It is believed that the Soviets probably would have favored an independent Kurdistan consisting of all the Kurdish areas of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. However, they were never able to completely guarantee the Kurds loyalty to the Soviet Union and feared that the spirit of independence of a greater Kurdistan would not be consistent with Soviet expansionist policies. Moreover in Kurdistan the power remained in the hands of the tribal chiefs and religious leaders who tended to be conservative and would not necessarily be open minded to Communist principles.<sup>182</sup>

#### **D. THE KOMALA**

The city of Mahabad was already the center of Kurdish nationalism in Iran. After the Allied occupation of the area, many of the local government officials who had been put in place by the central government, were replaced by Kurds. Several Kurdish chiefs first approached the British in September 1941, hoping that protectorate status would be granted to Kurdistan, but their request was refused.<sup>183</sup> On September 16, 1942 several Mahabad Kurds formed a committee (*Komala* in Kurdish) in order to further Kurdish self determination. Membership was very selective and secretive. It was limited to those who were the offspring of two Kurdish parents, therefore even partial Kurds or Azeris who had lived in Kurdistan and spoke only Kurdish were excluded. Members were only permitted to know the identity of others in their own cell. Komala had the goal of uniting all Kurds in an independent Kurdistan, including the areas outside of Iran. Partially due

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<sup>182</sup> Entessar, pg. 16.

<sup>183</sup> Mc Dowall, pg. 235.

to its intense secrecy, the Komala was unsuccessful in extending its power base to other Kurdish cities like Sanadaj and the Province of Kermanshah. These areas had prominent Kurdish Shi'a families which had for generations established close ties with the Persian government. These influential and powerful Kurds wanted no part of separating from Iran.<sup>184</sup>

Realizing that they could never achieve their goals without powerful support, the Komala turned towards the Soviet Union. At this time, the Komala adopted a Marxist doctrine and started to denounce western imperialism along with the promotion of an independent Kurdistan. They also formalized their relations with other non-Iranian Kurdish parties. In August 1944 a meeting was held at Mt. Dalanpar (where the borders of Turkey, Iran, and Iraq intersect) with Kurdish representatives from Iran, Iraq and Turkey. The delegates signed an agreement called the Peman Se Senier (Pact of the Three Borders). The pact was a symbolic gesture of Kurdish unity and it outlined what they considered the borders of Kurdistan should be. In reality, the region they claimed for Kurdistan was grossly extended beyond the regions populated by Kurds. It extended northwest to the Black Sea, and southerly including the oil rich areas of Iran and Iraq, all the way to the Persian Gulf.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Entessar, pg. 17.

<sup>185</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 100-101.

## **E. QAZI MUHAMMAD**

During this time, the central committee of Komala started to debate the membership of Qazi Muhammad. He was a Sunni religious leader and one of Mahabad's leading citizens. His father had worked closely with Agha Simko in the 1920's and his brother was a member of the Iranian Parliament which gave him an avenue to address Kurdish grievances. The central committee feared that his authoritarian personality would take over the Komala. Moreover they were not sure under which conditions that conservative leader would join the leftist group, and many of the Komala members didn't trust him. However it was agreed that his involvement was essential to overcome various tribal rivalries and to grant the Komala more status. In October 1944 Qazi Muhammad was invited to join the Komala as its spiritual leader, but was not invited to be a member of its central committee.<sup>186</sup>

## **F. THE FORMATION OF THE KDP-I**

By 1945, it was clear Komala needed some sort of military aid to promote its cause, so they turned to the Soviet Union for assistance. The Soviets were not comfortable with the Komala's nationalist orientation and resented the Komala's unwillingness to establish closer ties with the Soviet sponsored Iranian Azerbaijan. Stalin wanted to merge the Azeri and Kurdish secessionist movements. However they feared that the British were planning another meeting with the Kurdish

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<sup>186</sup> Entessar, pg. 18-19.



leaders, and they preferred that the Kurds turn to the north for support, rather than to the British in the south. To facilitate this a high level Kurdish delegation was invited to meet with the Soviet Azerbaijan Prime Minister. The delegation, led by Qazi Muhammad arrived in Baku in September 1945. At Baku they were told by Baghirov that people with separate cultures and languages deserved their own government and that Iran contained four separate *nations* within its borders: the Farsi-speaking Persians, the Gilaki-speaking people south of the Caspian, and those of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. Each nation was eventually to be granted autonomy by the Soviets, with Azerbaijan first. They were further informed that "there was no need... for the Kurds to hurry the formation of their own state."<sup>187</sup> Kurdish freedom must be based on the triumph of popular forces, not in Iran alone but also in Iraq and Turkey.

A separate Kurdish state was a desirable thing to be considered in the future when the entire *nation* could be united. In the meantime Kurdish aspirations should be achieved within Azerbaijani autonomy<sup>188</sup>

Qazi Muhammad responded that their autonomy should happen with the unity of the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, but they did not want it linked with Azerbaijan. Baghirov suggested that the Komola needed to transcend its parochialism and develop into a more disciplined political party before the Soviet Union would fully support it.

As a result of Baghirov's suggestions, and under the leadership of Qazi Muhammad a new political party was created to humor the Soviets. The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I) was therefore founded in September 1945. Qazi Muhammad urged all Kurds and Komala members to

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<sup>187</sup> William Eagleton Jr., *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, ( London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pg. 44.

<sup>188</sup> Entessar, pg. 19.

join it as an umbrella group for Kurdish independence. However the new party quickly became associated with the authoritarian one man rule of Qazi Muhammad.<sup>189</sup>

The KDP-I manifesto was developed with Soviet consul and contained the following points:

- The Kurdish people of Iran shall have self-government in the administration of their local affairs, and obtain autonomy within the limits of the Iranian state.
- Kurdish language shall be the official language and shall be used in education.
- A Provincial Council in Kurdistan shall be elected immediately according to Iranian constitutional law and shall exercise its right of controlling and overseeing all public meetings.
- All government officials shall be Kurds.
- Revenue collected in Kurdistan shall be spent there.
- The Democratic Party of Kurdistan shall make efforts to establish complete fraternity with the people of Azerbaijan and minority elements living there.
- The party shall work for the improvement of the moral standards, the health, and the economic conditions of the Kurdish people by the development of education, public health, commerce, and agriculture.<sup>190</sup>

## **G. THE REPUBLIC OF MAHABAD**

On January 22, 1946, the independent Republic of Mahabad was established at a large ceremony. Several tribal chiefs attended the proclamation to show their support. The most

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<sup>189</sup> Entessar, pg. 19.

<sup>190</sup> Eagleton, pg. 57.

significant was Mullah Mustafa Barzani who had fled from Iraq after leading unsuccessful rebellions. Barzani brought with him approximately 10,000 supporters including approximately 3,000 trained *pesh mergas*. As the foremost Kurdish fighter of the time, his presence granted the new republic not only trained *pesh mergas*, but also substantial credibility among the traditional Kurdish tribal leaders who were suspicious of Qazi Mohammad's progressive ideas. Although Barzani was a conservative tribal leader, and did not necessarily support the KDP-I's liberal economic and social agendas, but he was pragmatic enough to put aside his ideological differences. At the proclamation ceremony Qazi Mohammed made a short speech (less than 15 minutes) in which he said that the Kurds were a distinct people and therefore deserved their own nation and he then proclaimed the autonomous Kurdish Republic. He referred to Mahabad's powerful friends (the Soviets) and thanked everyone for making him the leader. To placate the Soviets, he made several references to Kurdish Azerbaijani brotherhood.

Before this speech, he had been escorted to the platform and spoke wearing a long ill-fitting coat and the white turban of a religious dignitary. At the end of his speech he removed his coat to reveal a Soviet general's uniform underneath. He had apparently planned on wearing the cap as well, but his advisors talked him out of it, since the turban was more appropriate.<sup>191</sup>

Great Britain and the United States were hardly enthusiastic about the proclamation of independence. They feared that the example of Mahabad would encourage the Kurds in the oil rich regions of Iraq and the other minorities in Iran to declare independence or autonomy. Most of all, they feared that supporting the Republic would cause Turkey, who had already been sympathetic

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<sup>191</sup> Eagleton, pg. 62 - 64.

with Germany during the war, to move away from the Allies. Likewise, they did not want to outwardly criticize their ally, the Soviet Union for supporting the Republic. Therefore the United States and Great Britain were left with no reasonable alternatives than the actions they took of not formally recognizing the Republic and to encourage Tehran to regain control of the area.

In April 1946 a delegation led by Qazi Muhammad traveled to Tabriz. While there, a treaty was signed with the head of the new Azerbaijan Republic, Tofar Pishvari. The treaty set up diplomatic relations between the two fledgling states, and delineated that each would consider the others interests when dealing with Iran, and promised to look out for the others minorities in their territories. However the treaty provisions were never enacted. It was just a marriage of convenience at the request of the Soviets. The Soviets wanted the two republics allied in order to achieve maximum concessions from the Iranian government.<sup>192</sup>

In negotiations with the Iranian Prime Minister, Ahmad Qavam, the Soviets had promised to remove their troops in return for oil concessions in the north. However under Iranian law, oil concessions needed to be voted on by Parliament, whose term had expired and new elections were not allowed until after all occupying troops left. Therefore, in April 1946, an agreement was reached in which the Soviets promised to withdraw from Iran, and they promised to treat the Azerbaijan separation as a Iranian internal matter. In return the agreement called for the establishment of an Iranian Soviet oil Company. By May 9th the Soviets had withdrawn but the newly elected

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<sup>192</sup> Eagleton, pg. 76 - 83.

Parliament never approved the Soviet concessions or the formation of the Iranian Soviet Oil Company.<sup>193</sup>

Meanwhile Azerbaijan had anticipated the withdrawal of the Soviet troops and had begun negotiations with Tehran, for a peaceful settlement following the Soviets departure. In return for Azerbaijan becoming part of Iran again, the province was granted several political and economic concessions.<sup>194</sup>

The Kurds also sent a delegation to Tehran to meet with the Prime Minister, but unlike Azerbaijan they were not granted any concessions. Qavam told them that Kurdistan was part of Azerbaijan and therefore if they wanted their own province within Iran, they would need to negotiate with Azerbaijan, because according to Qavam the Kurdish Republic, by itself, had no legal standing.<sup>195</sup>

The Soviets moved out and the Iranian Army under General Hamayuni moved in. On December 17, 1946, the Army took control of Mahabad. On March 31, 1947, Qazi Mohammed and other Mahabad officials were hung in the central square of Mahabad. Although the Republic lasted less than a year and incorporated less than one third of the Iranian Kurds it has become a major rallying point, along with the Treaty of Sevres.<sup>196</sup> Although the exact reasons behind the Soviet withdrawal from Iran after World War II remain disputed, their presence allowed the Kurds to set up their own state. Although the Republic of Mahabad would not have existed without Soviet

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<sup>193</sup> Entessar, pg. 22.

<sup>194</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 107-108.

<sup>195</sup> Entessar, pg. 22 -23.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., pg. 23.

support, they remained largely uninvolved in its internal affairs, and never had the influence over it which they enjoyed over Azerbaijan. One of the reasons the Azeri and Kurdish secessionist movements never merged was that the Soviets failed to recognize the animosity between the two ethnic groups. They made their support of Mahabad conditional upon an alliance with Iranian Azerbaijan in order to exercise more control over the Kurds. However they probably would have had more influence over the Kurds if they had made gestures of support for an independent Kurdistan. The Soviets failed to achieve their goals in Iran during WWII. They abandoned their support of the two republics and opted to bolster pro-Soviet forces within Iran itself. The territorial integrity of Iran therefore remained intact, which suited Great Britain, the United States, and Iran.

#### **H. BARZANI'S TREK TO THE SOVIET UNION**

Because of Mullah Mustafa Barzani's prominence, and the fact that he was not an Iranian, Tehran negotiated separately with him. Barzani volunteered to leave Mahabad with his tribe if Britain would guarantee their safety in Barzan, his tribal homeland. When Britain refused, Tehran offered to resettle the tribe near Hamadan. Barzani originally agreed to the government's proposal, but after talking with his brother Shaikh Ahmad, who was the titular and spiritual leader of the tribe, it was decided that the tribe would prefer to wait until Spring, when the mountain passes would be clear, and they could then return to their tribal lands and take them by force if necessary.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Eagleton, pg. 117 - 118.

The Iranian government would not allow the Barzanis to wait until Spring, unless they surrendered all of their weapons which the Barzanis refused to do. Through February and March, Barzani delayed returning to Iraq and there were several small skirmishes with the Iranian army. After negotiations with Baghdad an agreement was reached, granting amnesty to the tribe. As a result Shaikh Ahmad led the bulk of the tribe over the border, where they surrendered to the Iraqi army. Meanwhile Mullah Mustafa with some of the fighters took a less exposed route. Baghdad's guarantee of amnesty was quickly disregarded and four former Iraqi army officers who had gone over to Mahabad with the Barzanis were executed.<sup>198</sup>

Realizing the futility of peacefully resettling in Iraq, Iran or Turkey, Mullah Mustafa decided to head to the Soviet Union. Therefore at the end of May, with almost eight hundred of his hardest fighters, Barzani began his legendary 220 mile, fourteen-day march. The Iranian army had strict orders to stop Barzani, and several troops were dispatched to the area to achieve this end. Yet when these troops got close, instead of locating and stopping the tribe, they usually found themselves the victims of an ambush by the Barzanis. By June 15th, having successfully eluded the Iraqi, Turkish, and Iranian armies, Mullah Mustafa entered the Soviet Union, where he stayed for the next eleven years and four months.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 115.

<sup>199</sup> Eagleton, pg. 126 - 129.

## **I. UNDER THE SHAH'S REGIME**

After the fall of the Mahabad Republic, efforts to strengthen the central government's control were successful and most Kurds returned to their tribal lifestyles and were careful to keep out of the government's way. In the fifties, Iran experienced the rise of the National Front under Mossadegh, which most Kurds enthusiastically supported. A Kurd was even a member of Mossadegh's cabinet. Mossadegh's nationalistic platform, liberal democratic ideals, with support of free elections generated enthusiasm among Kurdish intellectuals. As a result the KDP-I, which had been outlawed since the fall of Mahabad, began to meet quietly again. In 1952 KDP-I candidates were able to participate in provincial elections, but the election was nullified, and the army again entered Mahabad. The government placed Shah-supporters in local positions. Mossadegh spoke out against the Shahs disregard for free elections, solidifying his support among the Kurds.

Meanwhile there were several small Kurdish pheasant revolts against the Shah, and also against the Kurdish feudal landlords. As a result, an alliance was formed between the Shah, the Kurdish landlords and tribal Khans. However most Kurdish pheasants supported Mossadegh and voted to limit the Shah's role to that of a constitutional monarch in August 1953. In the city of Mahabad, 5,000 people participated in the vote, and the Shah received only two votes. However



after Operation Ajax,<sup>200</sup> engineered by the United States and Great Britain, the Shah was returned to power, and all the new rights and privileges the Kurds had obtained under Mossadegh were eliminated.<sup>201</sup>

Sporadic small and insignificant rebellions occasionally occurred throughout Iranian Kurdistan. The most significant was in 1956 by the Javanioudi tried near Kermanshah. Due to the terrain, the tribe had managed to remain isolated and resist previous incursions by the Shah's army, yet in 1956 they were easily beaten. This was the last significant revolt until the Iranian Revolution.<sup>202</sup>

It would be wrong to think the Shah needed to use military force in order to make the Kurds comply. The Shah managed to pacify the vast majority of Kurds by allowing and even inviting the Kurds to participate in the system. Moreover some of the larger tribes were granted privileges or positions for their support. For example, the Jaf tribe's land was left virtually untouched by the land reform of the White Revolution. In addition, Salar Jaf and Sardar Jaf, both were given positions in the palace and in parliament. Many Kurds assumed prominent roles in the government

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<sup>200</sup> Operation Ajax was a plan originally proposed by the British, and carried out by the British and the CIA, to oust Mossadegh, in favor of the Shah in 1953. Although the United States had initially supported the nationalist Mossadegh, his seizure of power from the Shah, his continuous campaign against foreign powers in Iran, and increasing reliance on the Communist Tudeh party quickly alienated the United States. On the other hand, Great Britain had never supported Mossadegh, who had risen to power campaigning to nationalize the profitable Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, in which Great Britain held the majority of the shares. Before Operation Ajax, the Shah was relatively weak, it was only after his return to power that he consolidated his control and became the absolute monarch that he is remembered for.

<sup>201</sup> Entessar, pg. 23 - 26.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pg. 27.

and were allowed to rise to the highest positions in the army. Although the Shah required Persian to be the official language, limited radio and television broadcasts in Kurdish were allowed.<sup>203</sup> This policy of allowing participation in the government, along with censorship limited to separatist or anti-Shah material, allowed many Kurds to be successfully integrated into Iranian society. This integration policy effectively prevented the development of any serious rebellions, and led Kurds to envision a more promising future as a part of the Iranian state.

## **J. RELATIONS WITH THE KURDS OF IRAQ IN THE 60'S**

In the sixties, Mullah Mostafa Barzani had returned from the Soviet Union, formed the KDP, and had begun to revolt against the Iraqi government again. The Shah recognized the opportunity to threaten Baghdad and get territorial concessions, as well as to weaken his own Kurds by supporting Barzani's rebellion. By supporting Barzani, Iran sought to control him and get him to stop aiding Iranian Kurds. Therefore the Shah along with the U.S. and Israel began supplying Barzani with weapons, intelligence, money and food.

In 1966, Barzani issued a statement, directing all Kurds to cease activities against the Shah, and instead to help him against Baghdad, since to do otherwise, would lead to a cessation of Iranian support for his revolt. Therefore, those who continued to oppose the Shah would be considered enemies of the revolution. This statement caused several Iranian Kurds who had been fighting with Barzani to return to Iran; and in 1967, revolt against the Shah in an area between Mahabad, Baneh,

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<sup>203</sup> Entessar, pg. 27.

and Sardasht. However, they were quickly surrounded by the Iranian army and their escape route to Iraq was blocked by Barzani's men. Barzani arrested those who tried to escape over the border, and executed some himself. The others were handed over to the Iranian forces and most of those were executed too.<sup>204</sup> This event is significant because it severed ties between the KDP of Iran and Iraq. Because they were divided, the Iraqi Kurds could not inspire the Iranian Kurds to revolt. Thus the Shah managed to marginalize the threat from his own Kurdish population.

#### **K. THE TREATY OF ALGIERS**

After the secondary objective of dividing the the KDP was realized, the Shah continued to support the Iraqi Kurds in their struggle against Baghdad until 1975. At this point, Saddam Hussein, humiliated, concluded a peace with the Treaty of Algiers. Saddam conceded half of the Shatt el-Arab to Iran. In return, the Shah, no longer having use for the Kurds, had to cease supporting them. The Iraqi Kurds saw this as a great deception, not only by Iran, but also the United States and Israel, for they were quickly overcome by Baghdad's forces. This was not the first time, nor the last, in which the Kurds have had supporters renege. However, this feeling of betrayal has not prevented the Kurds from turning to those who have backed out on them in the past for aid or support when it was needed. However it has left them suspicious of duplicity when dealing with other nations.

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<sup>204</sup> Entessar, pg. 28 - 29.

The Iranian Kurds enjoyed a period under the Shah in which they were able to use their own language, practice their own religion and customs, free from persecution. Moreover, they were not excluded from the political process, and their ethnicity did not prevent them from rising to the highest levels. Under these circumstances, the Kurds in Iran enjoyed more freedom than a Kurd in any other nation. Because there was virtually no institutionalized persecution against them, Iranian Kurds remained relatively free from the bloody struggles that the Kurds waged in Turkey and Iraq. Although the Kurds in Iran were granted liberties Kurds in other nations were not allowed, they were also Iranian. Therefore like most Iranians, they too became dissatisfied with the Shah and initially actively supported the Islamic Revolution.

#### **L. THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION**

The Kurds saw the Revolution not only as a way to get rid of the Shah but also as a method to achieve autonomy. However their hopes for autonomy eventually clashed with Khomeini's goal of establishing a strong centralized Islamic Republic. His view of different ethnic minorities is summarized in this statement:

Sometimes the word minorities is used to refer to people such as the Kurds, Lurs, Turks, Persians, Baluchis, and such. These people should not be called minorities, because this term assumes that there is a difference between these brothers. In Islam, such a difference has no place at all. There is no difference between Muslims who speak different languages, for instance, the Arabs or the Persians. It is very probable that such problems have been created by those who do not wish the Muslim countries to be united...They create the issues of nationalism of Pan-Arabism, Pan Turkism,

and such isms, which are contrary Islamic doctrines. Their plan is to destroy Islam and the Islamic philosophy.<sup>205</sup>

The Islamic Constitution which cites Persian as the official language allows the use of the vernacular in media and in schools when used in conjunction with Persian. It also recognizes religious minorities, like Christians and Jews, however, Islamic minorities are considered to be a part of the Islamic Umma or community and therefore are given no separate privileges or recognition. Since the predominantly Sunni Kurds were considered to be part of the whole Islamic community, they were not even recognized as having a separate religion than the Iranian Shia population, consequently they were not given the recognition, nor guarantees to worship as they please. Although, the Kurds are often considered to be religious zealots by western analysts, they tend to be less devout than many other peasants in the Middle East. A common saying in Iran and Iraq is that "compared to an infidel, the Kurd is a Muslim."<sup>206</sup> Most Kurds primary allegiance is to the tribe, and they are more tribal than religious. This is partially because their oppressors have often been fellow Muslims.

The Kurds hoped to develop an autonomous future out of the revolution. With this in mind, Dr. Adbul Rahman Ghassemlou who had become the Secretary General of the KDP-I in 1973 returned from exile in France right before the revolution. However, the Kurds quickly became disenchanted with the Revolution. Several of the Kurdish groups overlooked their differences and joined the "Council of the Kurdish People" headed by Shaikh Ezzedin Hussein with Ghassemlou

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<sup>205</sup> Entessar, pg. 29.

<sup>206</sup> Ciment, pg. 106.

as its spokesman. The Council represented the Kurds in negotiations with the government. They boycotted the March 30-31 1979 referendum, in which the Iranians were asked whether they wanted a monarchical system or an Islamic Republic. The KDP-I and other groups boycotted it because it only offered the two choices. As a result 98.2% of the Iranians voted for an Islamic Republic.<sup>207</sup>

The draft constitution which was heavily influenced by the Iranian Constitution of 1906 and the French Constitution of the Fifth Republic. It fell short of what the Kurds wanted, but it did not allow a system dominated by the clerics. Khomeini approved the draft with some minor modifications and asked Bazargan to submit it for public approval. However Bazargan and opposition groups wanted it debated by a constituent assembly of 500. A compromise resulted in a 73 member Assembly of Experts being tasked with review of the draft. Shaikh Ezzeden Hussein, the Sunni spiritual leader of Mahabad argued that the constitution should recognize the cultural, economic, social and political rights of all ethnic groups. He also argued that Kurdish rights including the redrawing of the geographic provincial boundaries of Iran. These ethnic demands, allowing a limited secular autonomy threatened the unity of the Islamic state.<sup>208</sup>

At the time, the Islamic government had not firmly consolidated its power over all of Iran. In January 1979 the Kurds captured some military garrisons and gendarmerie outposts, seizing their weapons. However, they remained hopeful that the revolutionary government's claims to support and respect the rights of minorities were true. Under this belief the KDP-I presented their party's program for Kurdish autonomy. Their program included the following points:

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<sup>207</sup> Entessar, pg. 30.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., pg. 31.

- The boundaries of Kurdistan would be determined by the Kurdish people and would take into consideration historical, economic and geographical conditions.
- On matters of defense, foreign affairs and long-term economic planning, Kurdistan would abide by the decisions of the central government. The Central Bank of Iran would control the currency.
- There would be a Kurdish parliament, whose members would be popularly elected. This would be the highest legislative power in the province.
- All government departments in the province would be run locally rather than from the capital.
- There would be a people's army, but the police and gendarmerie would be abolished and replaced by a national guard.
- Kurdish would be the official language of the provisional government and would be taught in all schools. Persian would also continue to be an official language.
- All ethnic minorities in Kurdistan would enjoy equal rights and would be allowed to use their own languages and observe their own traditions.
- Freedom of speech and of the press, rights of association, and trade-union activities would be guaranteed. The Kurdish people would have the right to travel freely and choose their own occupation.<sup>209</sup>

Throughout spring and summer of 1979 there were clashes between the Kurds and the government. Kurdish rebels even were able to seize land and redistributed it amongst themselves.<sup>210</sup> In August 1979 Khomeini declared a Holy War on the Kurds, banned Kurdish political organizations, canceled Ghassemlou's membership in the Council of Experts and denounced both

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<sup>209</sup> Kreyenbroek and Sperl, pg. 183.

<sup>210</sup> Ciment, pg. 69.

Husseini and Ghassemlou as enemies of the Republic. The KDP-I was called "the party of Satan". Clashes broke out in Kurdistan and the Iranian army attacked the towns and villages. Revolutionary trials were held and many were executed after trials that lasted a couple of minutes. A cease fire was declared on November 2nd and a group of delegates went to Kurdistan for talks. Husseini represented the Kurds. But the Government refused to recognize the Kurds as anything other than a religious minority and demanded full disarmament of the Kurdish region.

In November 1979 the Assembly of Experts approved the new constitution with as strong a system of centralized government as under the Shah. In January 1980 another cease fire was declared between the Kurds and Tehran. Khomeini promised an amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing the rights of the Sunni's in regions where they are the majority. However the Kurds rejected it because they wanted recognition as an ethnic and not just a religious minority, because there are both Sunni and Shiite Kurds in Iran.<sup>211</sup> However this was unacceptable to the Khomeini government, which was almost as nationalistic as it was religious. In the Presidential election in 1980 the Kurds backed Massoud Pajavi, leader of the mujahidin but Khomeini backed Bani-Sadr who won in the expected landslide victory. In the parliamentary elections, the KDP-I won 80% of the Kurdish vote. However Ghassemlou had no intention of going to Tehran. When Khomeini heard that he was not coming, he is said to have remarked "It's too bad, we could have had him arrested and shot."<sup>212</sup> At the time, Iranian Kurdistan was erupting into a complete rebellion, and many Iranian troops were already fighting there when Iraq invaded.

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<sup>211</sup> Kreyenbroek and Sperl, pg. 185.

<sup>212</sup> Ciment, pg. 60.



## M. THE IRAN IRAQ WAR

In September 22, 1980, Iraq invaded Iran. At first this appeared as a godsend to the Kurds. The government troops which were in Kurdistan suppressing the rising tide of rebellion, were quickly sent to defend Iran from the foreign invaders. This left another power vacuum in the region, allowing the Kurds to regroup, and seize control of the area. The KDP-I turned to Iraq for military and economic aid.

By 1982, Tehran felt confident enough about the war with Iraq, to spare some troops, and attempt to resume control over Iranian Kurdistan, and a major offensive was launched. However the Iranian Kurds were essentially surrounded, with the Iranian army on one side and the Iraqi Kurds on the other. They could not turn to the Iraqi Kurds for assistance, because they were allied with the Iranian government against Baghdad. In 1982, Khomeini again diverted some troops from the war, and launched another devastating offensive against his rebellious Kurds. Over 250,000 troops cleared a 2,000 square kilometer area, destroying hundreds of villages.<sup>213</sup> The Kurds were barely able to survive the onslaught, even with all the weapons they had received from Iraq.

After the war, the Iranian military was not in a position to retaliate against the Kurds for siding with Iraq, like Saddam did in the infamous Anfal campaigns. However the Kurds were severely weakened, and were in no position to challenge Iranian control of the area.

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<sup>213</sup> Ciment, pg. 70.

## N. FRACTURED OPPOSITION TO THE ISLAMIC REGIME

Since the Islamic Revolution, opposition against the government has been divided and ineffective. The Kurds have continued their struggle against the regime alongside other opposition groups. In 1982 Bani Sadr was impeached and he and Rajavi flew to Paris where they set up the National Council of Resistance (NCR).<sup>214</sup> The KDP-I joined the Council which caused a split between the KDP-I and the other main Kurdish party in Iran, the Komala.<sup>215</sup> This Komala has no relation with the group from the forties, it is the Revolutionary Organization of the Foilers of Kurdistan which was founded in 1969, and is a Marxist Leninist organization. The split was caused because the Komala preaches self reliance and is against pragmatic alliances.<sup>216</sup> It was rational for the weakened KDP-I to join with other opposition groups to combat the regime, but this alienated many Kurds who saw their struggle against the regime independently from others. However the KDP-I remained the primary Kurdish party in Iran. Regardless, the KDP-I soon became disenchanted with the NCR due to Rajavi's leadership, and the controlling role exercised by the Mujahiddin. In 1984, Bani Sadr left the NCR and in March 1985, the KDP-I left it as well. This was partially because Rajavi lashed out at Ghassemlou for negotiating with Tehran without the permission of the NCR. Ghassemlou reiterated the KDP-I could negotiate when it pleased and that the Mujahiddin could not act as the sole decision maker in the NCR.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Entessar, pg. 40.

<sup>215</sup> Kreyenbroek and Sperl, pg. 187.

<sup>216</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 209.

<sup>217</sup> Entessar, pg. 39 - 41.

However the KDP-I, like the NCR was starting to develop factions. The main one was led by Ghassemlou which favored an armed struggle with the government. The other two primary factions were led by Karin Hessami and Ghani Bloovian both of whom have developed close relations with the Communist Tudeh party, and favored negotiations with the government. Because of this, their factions were marginalized in the Kurdish struggle with Iran. Ghassemlou's refusal to modify the KDP-I demands along with his willingness to negotiate with Tehran caused further division within the KDP-I.<sup>218</sup> At the party's Eighth Congress in 1988, 15 prominent members of the parties executive committee were expelled. These expelled members formed the KDPI - Revolutionary Leadership (KDPI-RL). This new party attracted several leftist members of the KDP-I, however since the expelled members didn't all agree and because of this new party's Marxist orientation, it has not been able to appeal to many Kurds.<sup>219</sup>

The Kurds of Iran are fractionalized and therefore do not make an effective opposition group. However, the Iranian government knows better than to disregard them. Tehran plays close attention to them, and when they are starting to get organized or a strong leader emerges amongst them, the government effectively deals with it.

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<sup>218</sup> Kreyenbroek and Sperl, pg. 191.

<sup>219</sup> Entessar, pg. 41.

## O. GHASSEMLOU'S ASSASSINATION

Ghassemlou, as a strong leader, was able to hold together a large part of the KDP-I. He was well respected by many. He spoke eight different languages and was a former professor of economics, who had taught in Paris and in Prague. He was a strong voice for Kurdish rights, and although he had led armed revolts against both the Shah and Khomeini, he was a political pragmatist, who disliked violence. He once said the reason, other nations never heard "enough about the Kurds, because we have never taken any hostages, never hijacked a plane. But I am very proud of this."<sup>220</sup> He had little patience for the for the other Kurdish groups and their failure to unite and provide a strong front. He was gaining a growing number of followers, therefore Tehran decided he needed to be dealt with before he became a larger threat.

Ghassemlou had arrived in Vienna on the 11th of July 1989 to discuss an autonomy agreement along with Abdullah Ghaderi- Azar (Deputy Chief of KDP-I) and Fadhil Rosoul (a member of the PUK, who was acting as an intermediary between Tehran and the Kurds). They met in a borrowed Vienna apartment with interior ministry official Muhammad Jaafari Saharoudi and Hadji Moustafavi, an intelligence operative. Amir Mansour Boyorgian stood guard at the door. On the 2nd day of the talks at 7:15 PM police found Saharoudi yelling for help in the street clutching his wounded arm. He said someone had broken it and shot the Kurds and he had been caught in the crossfire.

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<sup>220</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 196.

Ghassemlou's body was found riddled with bullets in an armchair and the other two Kurds were sprawled dead on the floor. The killers had tossed a blue baseball cap into Ghassemlou's lap. There was no sign of forced entry and evidence revealed that the furniture had even been rearranged after the shooting. Witnesses reported that they earlier had seen Saharoudi talking with a man who met Moustafavi's description, before the man drove off on a red Suzuki motor bike. Saharoudi had also been seen handing Bozorgian an envelope with \$9,000 cash. The man on the Suzuki was apparently trying to leave with the murder weapons, which were found the next day at the dump. Two pistols with silencers, a bloodstained wind breaker and the bill of sale for the Suzuki (bought 6 months before by Saharoudi) were found there.

The police originally detained Bozorgian, yet he later was released. He then went to the Iranian embassy where he remained in hiding. Shahroudi was given back his diplomatic passport and the \$9,000 and was allowed to return to Iran. In Iran he was given a hero's welcome and has since been promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Revolutionary Guard. He currently heads the intelligence directorate for covert action. Four months later, warrants for the arrest of Saharoudi, Bozorgian and Moustafavi were issued. Bozorgian remains at the embassy and the others remain in Iran. Austrian authorities sent a 16 page inquiry to Tehran asking for information on the case. They never received a response.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Bulloch and Morris, pg. 193 - 196.

## **P. SHARAFKANDI'S ASSASSINATION**

Dr. Sadeq Sharafkandi succeeded Ghassemlou as head of the KDP-I. On September 17, 1992, he met a similar fate. Eight members of various opposition groups were meeting in the back room of Berlin's Mykonos restaurant. Sharafkandi was the senior member of the group. At 11 PM an Iranian dissident, Parviz Dastmalchi glanced up from his lamb and stuffed grape leaves at what he thought was a late arrival. Someone yelled in Farsi "you sons of whores" and two gunmen opened fire. Dastmalchi threw himself backwards under a table and played dead. The shooting lasted less than a minute and the gunmen fled in a dark blue BMW. Sharafkandi and two others were killed instantly and a third died later. German authorities arrested five of eight suspects and they were tried in Berlin. The alleged leader Kazem Darabi is a 34 year old importer- exporter and is the German based link between Tehran and the Hezbollah and a member of the Iranian intelligence service VEVAK as well as a revolutionary guard member. The other four defendants are all members of either Hezbollah or the Amal. There was overwhelming evidence against them. The getaway car contained fingerprints of one of the defendants. One of the weapons recovered from a sports bag left in a parking lot was flecked with one of the victims blood and its had one of the defendants fingerprints.<sup>222</sup>

Tehran has effectively used its skill as international assassins to destroy the KDP-I leaders. With no strong leader, the KDP-I and the other Kurdish groups have retreated. Unable to effectively fight against Tehran, they have resorted to squabbling with themselves and other opposition groups.

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<sup>222</sup> Thomas Sancton, "The Tehran Connection," *Time*, March 21, 1994, Time magazine Inc., pg. 50, [LEXIS/NEXIS].

Iranian Kurds are probably more dissatisfied with the central government today, than any other time in their history. To prevent the sporadic low level outbreaks and to guard the border with Iraq, Tehran has an estimated 200,000 troops in the region.<sup>223</sup> The distance between the Kurds and Tehran has increased due to the rising tension over religion. Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims. However, Iranian Shia Kurds are starting to place a greater emphasis on their ethnicity in order to disassociate themselves from the Fundamentalist regime. This ethnic emphasis and nationalist fever is fueled even more by the recent successes of the Kurds in Iraq and the continuing struggle in Turkey. Despite their growing alienation from and dissatisfaction with the government, the Kurds of Iran, by themselves are no threat to the regime. They are more like an annoying rash which flares up occasionally.

The Iranian Kurds enjoy more freedom, than Kurds in Turkey or Iraq. The only significant rebellions against Tehran have occurred when the government was unable to exercise control over the region. When the government has been able to exert its power in the Kurdish areas, the Kurds have been too weak to rebel. Moreover, the Iranian Kurds have less to gain, and more to lose by revolting. By effectively assimilating the Kurds into Iranian life, the Iranian government has taken away much of the incentive to rebel.

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<sup>223</sup> Teimourian .





## V. CONCLUSION

### A. A HYPOTHETICAL KURDISTAN

Although it may be argued that the Kurdish nationalist movements have made progress since the 1920's, an independent Kurdistan is not a realistic outcome. The Kurds may have a valid claim to a state, but it is not likely to materialize and it is certainly not in U.S. interests, or any other states interest. First of all, granting independence to a state's localized minority could set a precedent which could incite a whole series of demands for self- determination. An independent Kurdistan would destabilize an already volatile region of the world. In addition, an independent Kurdistan would likely fragment and erupt into civil war resulting in a situation similar to that in the former Yugoslavia. Finally, while the majority of Kurds may want additional rights or recognition, most are not separatists.

There are many ethnic groups and minorities concentrated all over the world, however the world is divided by states and not demographics. However as states interact, they deal with other states, and not with the state's internal populations. Although some states may have relatively homogenous populations, most do not. A state's geographic barriers seldom reflect ethnic boundaries. Moreover, this is a transient world, and as people migrate these ethnic boundaries become more diffused and difficult to determine. If an ethnic group is contained within a single states boundaries, another state will seldom interfere. However if the ethnic group is not contained, and overflows a states perimeter, the affairs of the ethnic group cease to be a domestic concern of

the state they occupy, instead they become an international concern. In this instance, as in the case of the Kurds all states have an interest in promoting an equitable solution to any ethnic conflict which may arise.

The power of ethnicity should not be underestimated. While the principle of self determination sounds nice and simple, in reality it is not. "If every ethnic, religious, or linguistic group claimed statehood, there would be no limit to fragmentation, and peace, security and economic well-being for all would become ever more difficult to achieve."<sup>224</sup> If an independent Kurdistan were created, the likely outcome would be war. Turkey would never willingly forfeit such a large portion of itself, especially since the Kurdish section contains water, which is a valuable resource in the Middle East. Likewise Iraq would never willingly abandon control of the Mosul oil area.

Even if Turkey, Iraq, and Iran would permit the creation of an independent Kurdistan, it would be hard to imagine that it would be a stable country. Based on the historic animosities and rivalries amongst the Kurds themselves, a civil war would probably result. Once the Iraqi Kurds were free from the complete control of Baghdad, a civil war erupted and persisted despite the best efforts of many countries. Despite all the political drapery and rhetoric most Kurdish parties are little more than neo- tribal confederations. Loyalty to the Kurdish national identity is still often tertiary to tribal and religious affiliations, as well as personal ambitions. Moreover, "...cross border cooperation between political parties in Kurdistan remains tenuous and tentative, with the Iraqi PUK

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<sup>224</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandaemonium, Ethnicity in International Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pg. xii.

remaining the only party moderately willing to incur penalties itself for support of Turkish and Iranian Kurdish guerillas.”<sup>225</sup>

Most Kurds would happily remain citizens of the state they live in, if they had some basic rights, recognition, and were free from oppression. This reality has forced many hard line separatist groups like the PKK to adopt more moderate goals, in order to maintain their support. Most Kurds realize that autonomy within the confines of the regional state system is a more practical and realistic goal.

## **B. PROSPECTS**

There is no easy solution to the Kurdish question, nor is there likely to be a quick remedy. The Kurdish struggle has continued for over a century. It has increasingly become more nationalistic as opposed to religious, feudal or tribal. There is a long history of hatred, conflict and suspicion on all sides and these sentiments do not disappear overnight. On the other hand, they slowly dissipate with time. However, there are certain actions which may decrease the tensions and help promote more stability in the region.

### **1. In Iraq**

It is debatable whether the perpetuation of the no fly zone is consistent with American interests. Saddam Hussein remains firmly entrenched in Baghdad despite U.S. efforts. Moreover, he has regained influence over the region as a result of his recent collaboration with the KDP. By

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<sup>225</sup> McDowall, pg. 447.

all reports, the recent events have seriously undermined U.S. progress in the region. In addition, it has undermined our credibility. Ostensibly we are present in Northern Iraq to protect the Kurds from Saddam, yet we were unable to prevent Iraqi forces from entering the area, just as we were unable to prevent them from being invited in. Furthermore the civil war between the KDP and PUK left many dead. We hold some responsibility for the fighting in the no fly zone much like parents are responsible for keeping their children from fighting with each other, or stopping one from inviting the bully next door to beat up the other.

In Iraq, the U.S. is stuck between a rock and a hard place. If we leave the Kurds, and return the area to Saddam's control we also lose credibility. The main problem with the no fly zone is that it is was supposed to be temporary solution, yet it has persisted for five years and there is no end in sight. Saddam's authoritarian rule over the people of Iraq remains unchanged. Furthermore, the Kurds "...see the safe haven as an interim step on the road to statehood."<sup>226</sup> It only adds fuel to their quest for independence.

Regardless of the future of the safe haven, the Kurds in Iraq have the potential for autonomy. Baghdad has repeatedly agreed in principle to a limited autonomy for the Kurds in several agreements since the 70's. The fact that they have failed to implement any of the agreements is just an indication of Baghdad authoritarian determination not to concede any power. If a more democratic government ever does emerge in Baghdad, it will find it hard not to implement a twenty year old principle. The challenges in that instance would be to determined the exact authority and boundaries of an autonomous Kurdish region.

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<sup>226</sup> Ciment, pg. 202.

## **2. In Turkey**

The situation in Turkey is not promising. The government's decision to pursue the military option is clearly not solving the problem. In fact the solution they are pursuing, only serves to exacerbate the struggle. The parallels between our experience in Vietnam and Ankara's policies in Kurdistan is eerie. The strategic hamlets, fire free zones and village guards did not work in Vietnam and they are not working in Turkey. However, we could leave Vietnam, and Turkey can not leave. There is no denying that the Turkish military is better trained and better equipped just like we were in Vietnam. Likewise, the military wins every battle, but fails to win the hearts and the minds of the Kurds.

By imprisoning the Kurdish members of parliament and banning all Kurdish political parties the Turkish government have pushed the Kurds out of the political process. In addition the PKK is the only political party left championing Kurdish rights. The war has had devastating effects on the Turkish economy which the country can not endure for long. By pursuing a military solution they have also made assimilation of the Kurds less likely. It has increased tensions between the Turks and Kurds. Although officially there is no discrimination, some prejudice is inevitable and perfectly understandable in every conscript soldier who has found himself a target in Kurdistan.

Turkey has replaced Iran as the pillar of U.S. strategy in the Middle East. Despite the governments increasing instability, this gives the U.S. considerable influence in Ankara's policies. We need to encourage Turkey to adopt political and social solutions to the Kurdish unrest. The polarization between the Kurds and Turks is only enhanced by military operations. Turkey needs to continue the policies of recognition, initiated by Ozal and not the military option taken by Ciller.

The living conditions in Kurdistan, especially the education need improvement. Although Turkey has made some effort in this area with the Southeastern Anatolian dam project, more work is needed.

### **3. In Iran**

The situations of the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey is much more volatile and overshadows the Iranian Kurds. On the other hand, today they are only a minor nuisance to the government. They remain a weak opposition force to the current government, and it is unlikely that even with foreign support that they would become a serious threat. However, they should not be disregarded, if Tehran's control of the country ever fades, it is certain that the Kurds will once again assert themselves as they have in the past.

There is no simple recipe for dealing with the Kurds. Only with education, recognition and acceptance of the Kurds as a separate ethnic group is a solution possible. Moreover, no matter how much times change, some things take longer to evolve. The traditional Kurdish loyalties and rivalries remain salient today, and traces of them are likely to still be visible in the future. The same sentiments which mobilized the Kurds in history, are still effective. Furthermore, the Kurds continue to be incapable of transcending their differences, and uniting behind a common cause. The following remarks by William Hay, a British administrator in Iraq 75 year ago, could just as easily have been written today.

[The Kurds] are not a political entity. They are a collection of tribes without any cohesion, and showing little desire for cohesion. They prefer to live in their mountain fastnesses and pay homage to whatever Government may be in power, as long as it exercises little more than a nominal authority. The day the Kurds awake to a national consciousness and combine, the Turkish, Persian and Arab states will crumble to dust before them That day is yet far off.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ciment, pg. 206.

Therefore it is important to understand the traditional alliances and cleavages, as well as the inspirations and motivators in an ethnic conflict. Even though there are economic, social and political aspects within the Kurdish struggle, it is not an economic, social, or political struggle. It is primarily an ethnic conflict.





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